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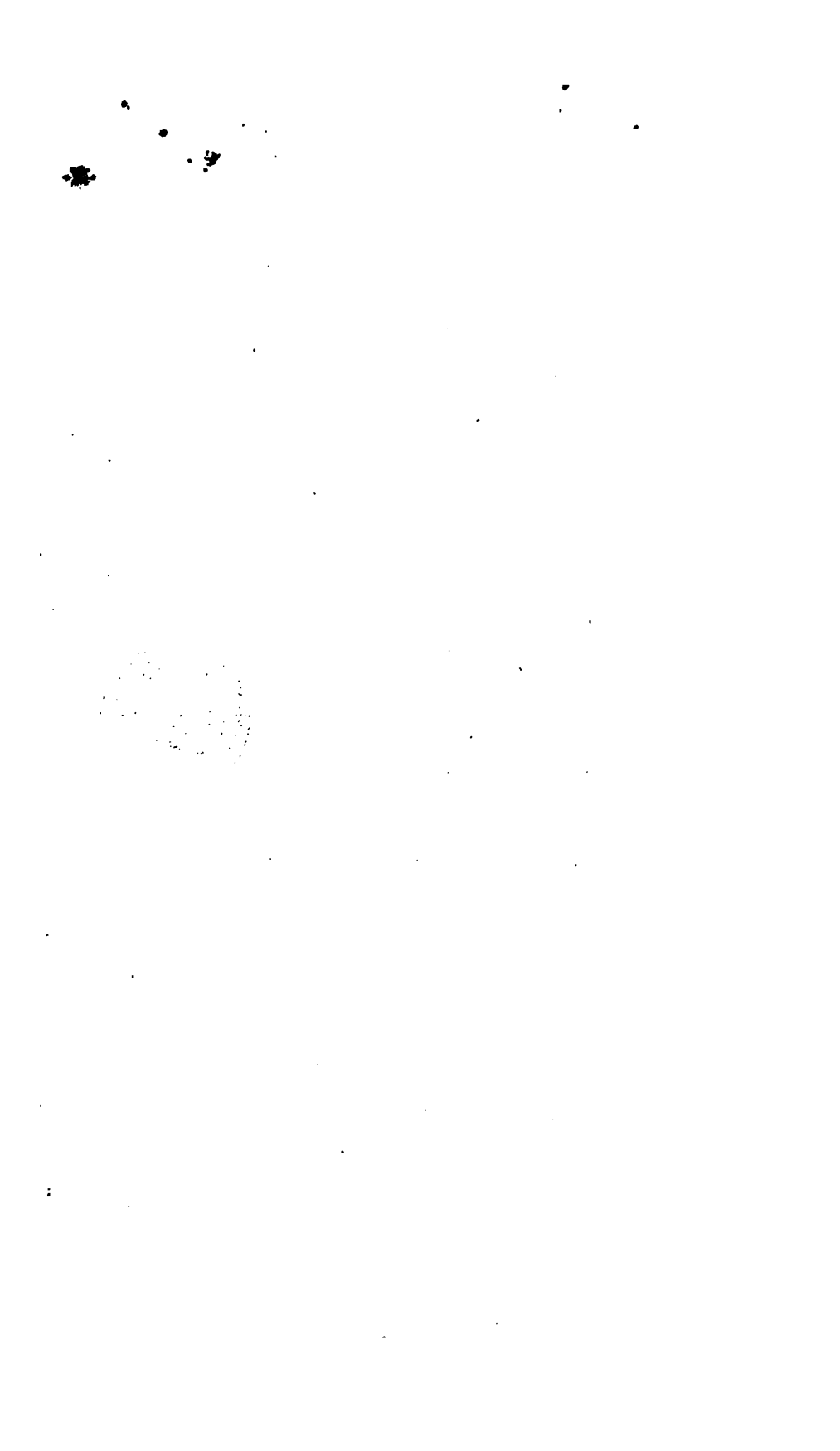












PRACTICAL SERMONS

BY

DIGNITARIES AND OTHER CLERGYMEN
OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF ENGLAND
AND IRELAND.



VOLUME THE THIRD.

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P R E F A C E.

As this Volume concludes the present series of these Sermons, it only remains for me to repeat my acknowledgments to those Prelates and Clergymen who have enabled me to present so many excellent Discourses to the public, and to add my hopes, that the work may prove generally and extensively useful.

I regret to find that a Sermon has been inadvertently inserted on the Claims of the Church Building Society, which, as I discovered some time after it was printed in this series, had been taken, with very little alteration, from one of Bishop Dehon's published Sermons.

JOHN CLARKE CROSTHWAITE.

St. Mary-at-Hill,
June 1, 1846.

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THE DANGER OF NATIONAL FORGETFULNESS OF GOD.

PREACHED AT THE CONSECRATION OF THE NEW CHURCH AT
THE WOLVERTON STATION ON THE LONDON AND
BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY.

BY

THE RIGHT REVEREND

JOHN KAYE, D.D.,

LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

ISAIAH XLVII., 10.

*For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness; thou hast said,
None seeth me; thy wisdom and thy knowledge it hath
perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am,
and none else beside me.*

THE visions of futurity vouchsafed to the prophet Isaiah were often of a melancholy character. It was his unwelcome office to predict the long series of miseries which his countrymen would bring upon themselves by their repeated transgressions—the destruction of their city and temple, their bondage at Babylon. But the prospects presented to his view were not always thus dark and gloomy; brighter and happier scenes were also disclosed to him. If at one time he was compelled to contemplate, as he looked down the vista of future years, the subjugation of his country to a fierce and relentless enemy, to see the sad train of exiles pursuing their weary way to the land of their captivity; it was at another his privilege to predict the downfall of the oppressor, and the return of the descendants of those exiles to Sion, amidst songs of rejoicing. To the latter class of more welcome and cheering predictions, that

contained in the chapter from which my text is taken, and in the preceding chapters, belongs. The prophet, as if the command were actually sounding in his ears, describes the Almighty as commissioning Cyrus to go forth for the destruction of the Assyrian empire—the preliminary step in the order of GOD's providence to the restoration of Jerusalem and the laying of the foundation of the second temple.

With respect to the events which were to form the subjects of the prophet's predictions, he was under the guidance and control of Divine Inspiration; he spake as he was moved by the HOLY GHOST. But he was not merely a passive organ; an inanimate machine, wholly unaffected by the character of those events, whether prosperous or adverse, whether fraught with benefit or mischief to his native land. His natural feelings were not suspended under the influence of inspiration. They still subsisted in full force and energy, and imparted their colouring to the language in which he clothed his predictions. In the 137th Psalm we find a lively representation of the bitterness of feeling with which the captive Israelites regarded their hard taskmasters. Keen, indeed, must have been the sense of oppression and indignity, strong the desire of vengeance which could be satisfied with nothing less than the destruction of a whole nation; which could close the gates of mercy against the helplessness and innocence of infancy. We find not, indeed, in the prophecies of Isaiah the same insatiate desire of full retribution; but with the exception of the passages in which he foretels the rise and progress and the glories of the Messiah's kingdom, there are none in which he breaks forth into livelier strains of exultation than those in which he describes the capture of the golden city; in which he calls upon

the daughter of Babylon, upon her who said that she should be a lady for ever, to sit down in the dust and bewail her departed greatness; in which he represents the inanimate things of creation, the fir-trees and cedars of Lebanon, as joining in the general joy at the downfall of the oppressor, and the mighty ones of the earth who had sunk beneath the power of the Assyrian monarch as coming forth from their tombs to triumph in his fall; to greet him with bitter taunts; to remind him that he had now become like unto them, reduced to the same state of degradation and misery. In the whole compass of the volume of inspiration we look in vain for images more sublime, embodied in language more forcible.

Cyrus was the immediate agent raised up by God for the destruction of the Babylonish empire; but the seeds of its decay and dissolution had long been ripening to maturity. The causes of the rise and fall of mighty kingdoms have in all ages been the same. God in his governance of the world has appointed that certain consequences shall ordinarily flow from certain lines of conduct; that when there is energy, and prudence and foresight among the rulers, and probity, temperance, frugality, self-denial, industry among the people, then the nation shall flourish and continually advance in wealth and power. But it is the condition of all human greatness to contain within itself the elements of its own destruction. Prosperity begets pride, and security, and carelessness. Wealth begets luxury; every one thinks only of himself, of consulting his own ease; the habits by which the nation rose to eminence are exchanged for idleness, self-indulgence, excess. There may be little change in the outward appearance of the state; it may still preserve the same imposing aspect; but within all is hollow and unsound; the first external shock reveals the

secret of its internal weakness, and lays the fabric in the dust. The corruption which pervaded the whole frame of society at Babylon, from the monarch to the slave, had prepared the way for the triumph of Cyrus.

We should, however, take a very imperfect and inadequate view of the case if we stopped here. The philosopher and the secular historian, in tracing the downfall of empires, may content themselves with pointing out the secondary causes which contributed to the event. But the sacred writers, writing under the influence of inspiration, either overlook them; or if they mention them, trace them back to their first cause, the controlling and directing hand of God. Thus the Prophet, in the chapter from which my text is taken, represents the downfall of the Babylonians as a punishment inflicted upon them by God for their forgetfulness of Him. As He had delivered Jerusalem to the sword of the Assyrians for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein, so now because the Assyrians had not recognized Him as the author of their greatness, He had raised up Cyrus in turn to be the instrument of their destruction. "Thou," says the Prophet, addressing the daughter of Babylon, "didst not lay these things to heart, but wert given to pleasures, and dwelledst carelessly. Your wisdom and your knowledge it hath perverted thee, and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me."

The practical lesson to be derived from the Prophet's denunciation against Babylon is that, when a nation forgets God, ceases to recognise Him as the author of all the blessings which it enjoys, ceases to rely on his protection and support, and trusts to its own power and strength, the doom of that nation is sealed; its downward course towards dissolution and ruin has begun; and there will be a speedy end to all its splendour and greatness.

Let us then look around us, my brethren, and ask ourselves whether we have no reason to be apprehensive for the safety of our own country; whether we see no traces of the workings of the same spirit which proved fatal to the Babylonish empire; no symptoms of a forgetfulness of God.

Two causes, according to the Prophet, conspired to render the Babylonians forgetful of God; they were given to pleasures and dwelt carelessly; and they were perverted by their overweening confidence in their power, their wisdom, and their knowledge. Are not, my brethren, both these causes in active operation among ourselves? Is it not true of us, that we are given to pleasures and living carelessly? We make it our boast that we are the richest people of the earth; that in consequence of the extent of our capital, and our skill, and ingenuity, we can command whatever is necessary, not merely to supply the wants, but to minister to the luxury of man, in greater abundance than any other nation. Wealth has produced its natural effects: it has engendered the desire of ease, of pleasure, of self-indulgence; and it is difficult for one under the dominion of this desire not to become forgetful of God. There is a continual contest going on in the heart of man between God and the World; between the things of eternity, the invisible realities which Religion proposes to us as the objects of Faith, and the things of time, the objects of sense with which we are at every moment conversant. It is this contest, this continual struggle for the dominion over the heart of man, which constitutes our present state a state of probation and discipline. Even under the most favourable circumstances, notwithstanding all that reason can suggest respecting the infinite superiority of the interests of eternity to those of time, the latter, aided by the

natural aversion of the heart to spiritual things, and being always present, always ready to minister to our immediate gratification, are too often victorious in the contest. But the circumstances of the man who is living at ease, in the midst of abundance, able to command all the enjoyments which the world affords, are not favourable circumstances. Their effect is to increase his natural indisposition to spiritual things. He is too well content with his present state to wish to be reminded that he is destined to exist in another; he would rather exclude futurity from his thoughts, because he cannot think of it without having the unwelcome consideration forced upon him that his career of pleasure and self-indulgence must have a close. But further, a long career of worldly prosperity not only has a tendency to make men forget God, to cause them to live without Him in the world, in a total disregard of His worship and of all the duties arising out of their relation to Him; it too often engenders an evil heart of unbelief, and betrays them into an open denial of God, of his superintending providence, and of their own dependence upon Him; they say in their prosperity as the Psalmist describes himself to have said, "I shall never be moved;" but without referring, as he referred, their strength to the LORD. It is among the rich and voluptuous, among those who are living in a continued round of pleasure and dissipation, that we generally observe the prevalence of a scoffing temper, of a disposition to turn sacred things into ridicule, to treat the awful truths revealed in Scripture—a judgment to come, and a state of retribution—as fables, the offspring of superstitious fear, or of a crafty design to gain ascendancy over the minds of men, and to reduce them to bondage. Such persons are not merely indifferent to religion, they are not content to look down with

an eye of contemptuous pity upon those who are weak enough to be influenced by its promises and threatenings; they regard it with aversion, and resent its exhortations to temperance, chastity, purity, and its restraints upon the indulgence of their appetites, as personal injuries; as unwarrantable interferences with them in their career of enjoyment; as encroachments on their freedom. A very slight acquaintance with the state of society must be sufficient to satisfy us that to too many, not merely of the wealthiest, but of what is termed the middle class, the description of the Prophet is as applicable as it was to the Babylonians—that they are given to pleasures and dwelling carelessly, and that luxury has produced among us the same effect as at Babylon; the effect which, whatever the external form under which it may exhibit itself, it will always produce; the effect of betraying numbers into a forgetfulness of God; some into a denial of his superintending Providence, of his very existence.

The other charge brought by the Prophet against the daughter of Babylon is, that her wisdom and her knowledge had perverted her; she was wearied in the multitude of her counsels; she had put her trust in her astrologers, her star-gazers, and her monthly prognosticators. The Assyrians had from the earliest times been celebrated for their astronomical knowledge. The clearness of the atmosphere in which they lived, and their boundless plains in which no obstacle intervened to prevent the eye from sweeping the whole expanse of heaven, were in the highest degree favourable to the observation of the celestial bodies. But with the study of astronomy appears to have grown up the belief that the planets exercised an influence over human affairs, and that by observing the positions and what are termed

the configurations of the stars, the destinies of individuals and of empires may be foretold; a belief which might appear to derive some sanction from the influence visibly exerted by the great luminaries of our system over the physical state of our globe. Instead therefore of taking the measures which ordinary prudence would have suggested to arrest the progress of Cyrus, the Assyrian monarch, relying on the predictions of his diviners, dwelt as securely as if no enemy were at his gates, and was surprised and slain while engaged in feasting and revelry. Thus were the wisdom and knowledge on which he placed his reliance the causes of his destruction. We, it is true, are as a people in little danger of being perverted by the knowledge on which the Babylonians especially prided themselves. Still if we were required to name the besetting sin of the nation, should we not all agree in naming the pride of intellect? We are filled with an overweening conceit of our advancement in every kind of knowledge; we speak with contempt, a contempt wholly unjustifiable, of those who have gone before us; and that too perhaps when we are merely raising a superstructure upon foundations which they had laid; merely carrying out their inventions; merely applying, sometimes misapplying, principles which they had discovered.

There is, in particular, one branch of science in which the superiority of the present to all preceding ages is assumed to be incontestable, mechanical science. In consequence of the more accurate knowledge which has been obtained of the properties of matter, and the continued improvement of machinery, results have been produced which never entered into the contemplation of our forefathers; plans which they regarded only as the visions of speculative men, enamoured of their

own fancies, not capable of being realized, have been carried into execution; and if time and space have not been annihilated, yet the facilities of passage from one country to another have been so much increased, that the most distant have been approximated, and the proverbial inconstancy of the winds and waves no longer presents an insuperable obstacle to the progress of the mariner. But we need not look beyond the spot on which we are now assembled for a striking example of the results of the advancement of mechanical science; the population around us may, without exaggeration, be said to have been called into existence by it. Confining ourselves then to the particular species of knowledge to which the occasion of our present meeting seems more immediately to direct our attention, let us enquire whether the Prophet's description of the Babylonians is not applicable to the people of this country; whether our wisdom and knowledge have not perverted us; whether they have not produced in us a forgetfulness of God, nay, more, a sceptical and infidel temper.

It might at first be supposed that the study of the phenomena of the natural world, bearing as they do the visible impress of infinite power and wisdom, would awaken man to a consciousness of his own weakness and insignificance, and impart a submissive and reverential tone to his feelings. It might be supposed that, while he is engaged in combining the various properties of matter for the accomplishment of the ends which he has in view, the conviction would be forced upon him that he is unable to call into existence a single particle of the matter which he uses, and he would thus be disposed to a ready recognition of an all-powerful Author of nature, the Creator and Preserver of the universe. Above all, it might be supposed that one

who is continually conversant with machinery, employing his faculties in its invention, its improvement, its adaptation to the production of various results, that such an one would be the first to admire the most perfect of all machinery, that by which the manifold processes of the vegetable and animal creation are carried on, or the heavenly bodies are retained in their orbits, and that he would pass from admiration of the work to that of its Author, of Him who designed the machinery, and adapted it to its several ends. What should we think of a man who, while we were contemplating the ingenious structure of the different parts of any one of the machines by which we are surrounded, should tell us that they afforded no evidence of an intelligent mind which designed them and presided over and directed their construction? Should we not pronounce him to be labouring under some strange infatuation, some gross perversion of the understanding? yet wherein would he differ from one who should contend that the various contrivances in the natural world, the nice structure of the human frame and the adaptation of the different members to the different functions which they are designed to perform, afford no proof of a contriving mind; that matter must assume some form, and that these are among the many possible combinations of material forms, or are the necessary results of some principle or law existing in matter, and causing its parts to arrange themselves in the form and situation in which we see them? Yet so it is that men, who have made the greatest advances in the different branches of physical science, and would feel no slight surprise or indignation at any attempt to deprive them of the honour which they deem their due, by describing their discoveries as the offspring, not of an acute understanding,

exercising itself upon a particular subject, and pursuing its investigations according to a definite and well-considered plan, but of a lucky chance or of the operation of some law by which their thoughts were necessarily constrained to arrange themselves in a certain order,—so it is, that such men have been found the foremost to deny that the exquisite contrivances in the natural world contain proofs of a contriver, the foremost, in a word, to exclude the Creator from his creation. “Shall the thing formed,” is the indignant question of the Prophet, “say of him that formed it, He has no understanding*?” He regarded such an assertion as the height of impious absurdity. What then would he have said, if the denial of understanding to God had proceeded from one who made his boast of the superiority of his own understanding?

One of the consequences of strongly addicting ourselves to a particular study or pursuit is, that we gradually attach to it an undue importance, and persuade ourselves that every other consideration ought to give way to that of advancing it. That which is so deeply interesting to ourselves ought, we think, to be equally so to all. We make no allowance for the diversities of tastes and inclinations among men; their feelings, their prejudices, their interests, all must be surrendered at our bidding. This is particularly observable in some who are labouring for the advancement of mechanical science in the present day; and as their labours for the most part tend to increase the physical gratifications and enjoyments of men, their claim to superior talent and knowledge is the more readily admitted. Utility is the test by which the value and importance of every pursuit

* Isaiah xxix. 16.

is tried; and by its utility is meant its tendency to increase our conveniences, and comforts, and luxuries. But the habit of thus connecting all our studies and pursuits with some physical result, can scarcely fail to strengthen the natural aversion of the heart to spiritual things, to confirm the dominion of the God of this world over our thoughts and affections. Surrounded as we are by matter, confined, as it has been strikingly expressed, in matter's prison, the influence of religion, which holds out to us not present but future enjoyments, which points to scenes not visible to the eye of sense, can only be kept alive by frequent abstraction of our minds from the things around us, by frequent representation to ourselves of the eternal realities which are the objects of a Christian faith. Let me not be suspected of thinking lightly of the talent and ingenuity and perseverance of those by whom the machinery of this country has been brought to its present perfection, or of undervaluing the services which they have rendered to society; my wish is to guard them against the absorbing character of the pursuit; its tendency to confine their thoughts to material and perishable objects, to indispose them to the consideration of their eternal interests, and to render them forgetful, perhaps worse than forgetful, of their dependence on the controlling Providence of God.

But it is of little use to warn men of their danger, unless you also provide them with the means of escaping it. We must not content ourselves with telling them that there is a tendency in all earthly pursuits to engross the mind, at once to indispose it to the contemplation of heavenly things, and to incapacitate it for the work. You must assist them in counteracting that tendency; you must by seasonable interruptions of their pursuits, turn their thoughts from the ordinary channels, and force

upon them the consideration of the awful truths still shrouded under the veil of futurity, but not on that account less real. To this end it is that CHRIST commissioned his Apostles to raise the fabric of a Visible Church on earth, which is designed to be a continual memorial to mankind of the relation in which they stand to God, and of the duties which they owe Him. All its positive institutions subserve this purpose. The setting apart of a particular order of men to instruct their brethren in the truths of religion; the setting apart of one day in seven to be a day of rest from worldly labours and occupations, and dedicated to the worship of God; the appointment of an external form of religion, of sacraments, of public services of praise and prayer, all these were designed to assist men in overcoming the temptation, to which they are continually exposed, of giving themselves up entirely to the objects of time and sense.

With the same view has the building which we are this day consecrating to the public worship of God been erected. The directors of the railroad company, having, in the prosecution of their great work, caused a town to spring up on a spot on which corn lately grew, and flocks were pastured, have not been insensible to the obligations arising out of their relation to the population which they have thus called into existence; the obligation of providing for the spiritual instruction of those whom they are employing as their instruments in carrying on their schemes of profit. They turned their attention first to the care of the young, of those who, if they receive not early impressions of good, will inevitably grow up in the knowledge and practice of that which is evil; they erected a school in which the children of the workmen might be brought up in the nurture and admonition of

the LORD, and trained to habits of industry, obedience, order. They then, with the assistance of the proprietors of the soil*, who willingly and liberally gave their co-operation, provided a Minister, who might instruct the older members of the new-formed community in that knowledge which alone can make them wise unto salvation: who might minister to their spiritual wants, and admonish, rebuke, console, encourage them, as need required. They have now completed their labour of love by erecting a church, in which all who are disposed may assemble to hear the Word of GOD read and preached, to offer up their united supplications to the throne of GOD; to participate in the sacraments instituted by CHRIST as the outward means of internal union to Him. They have done their part; they have done all that in them lies to rescue you from the dangers which more especially beset your path; they have set before your eyes a standing memorial, to tell you that there is a GOD; a GOD "who counteth the nations as a drop of a bucket, and as the small dust of the balance;" before whom "all the greatness of man is as nothing, as less than nothing, and vanity;" who in an instant can bring to nought the devices of the wise, the schemes of the crafty, the works of the mighty. They have done their part; and it now only remains for me to pray that you may be enabled to do yours; that GOD may give you the disposition to profit by the efforts which have been made for your eternal good; that his Spirit may guide your steps to his holy temple, and be ever with you while you are offering within its walls the tribute of prayer and thanksgiving; "casting down all vain imaginations and everything that exalteth itself against the knowledge of GOD, and bringing

* The Trustees of Radcliffe's Library, Oxford.

into captivity every thought to the obedience of CHRIST;" causing you to feel that you are ignorant, erring, sinful beings, dependent at every moment on the goodness of God, possessing no power of yourselves to help yourselves. Thus coming before Him with unfeigned humility of mind, and with a sincere desire to receive instruction in the things which pertain to your souls' health, may you be enabled to perform a service acceptable in his sight: may you continually grow in grace, and finally be made meet for admission into his heavenly kingdom, through the merits of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

SACRED MUSIC AND PSALMODY CONSIDERED.

BY

THE VENERABLE

H. K. BONNEY, D. D.,

ARCHDEACON OF LINCOLN.

(PREACHED IN LINCOLN CATHEDRAL.)

COLOSSIANS III. 16.

Let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord.

THE great Apostle to the Gentiles is, in these words, addressing himself to the Christians of Colosse, a city on the river Lycus, in Phrygia and Asia Minor, which was long ago destroyed. On its ruins the town of Khonas has since been erected, and is under the dominion of the Turk.

The inhabitants of this city and of the nation in which it stood were, during the time they were in a state of heathenism, much addicted to debauchery and corruption of morals, particularly in their manner of worshipping their lifeless images, whose praises they celebrated in inflammatory language, and in a wild and licentious manner.

To guard, therefore, the disciples of this city from relapsing into a practice so debasing in itself, and so offensive to the GOD of all purity, he earnestly exhorts them to "let the doctrine which CHRIST taught, and which He instructed his disciples to teach, be often recollected by them;" and that, with the greatest prudence, they should instruct and admonish each other, "with the

Psalms of David," and other "hymns" recorded in holy Scripture, and with the "songs" which had flowed from divine inspiration, "singing" them with true devotion, or grace in their hearts, unto "the LORD."

Of the same import is that passage of St. Paul to the Ephesians; in which he says "Be filled with the SPIRIT, speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the LORD:" in other words, performing this cheerful service with *devout affection*; a melody most pleasing to GOD.

The great Creator has so constituted the nature of the human species*, that there is a mutual sympathy between the passions of most men and the harmony of sounds, which, by their variety, will change and transport them into a correspondent variety of dispositions. They will elevate them into joy, and the next moment deject them into sorrow. They will incite them to indignation, and again soften them into love. There is no affection, no state of mind, which harmony cannot express or imitate; and, by that imitation, so accommodate itself as to govern and control us at its will. As "by mourning with those who mourn, and by rejoicing with those who rejoice," it can exhilarate the one and console the other; so by the same power, sympathizing with the other affections, it can excite the dull, quicken the inactive, moderate the eager, and allay the troubled spirit. There is scarcely any state of mind that it cannot confirm, nor feeling so irksome that it cannot change or ameliorate. Various are the passages of Scripture which point out the effect that it has upon the sensitive faculties of man. In Isaiah, "Ye shall have a song, as in the night when

* See W. JONES's *Sermons*.

a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the Mighty One of Israel *."

Agreeable to these notions are the sentiments of a well known writer of our Church, in his discourse on the words, "Sing to the LORD with a psalm of thanksgiving." (Ps. xcvi. 6.) "Man," he says, "is an instrument of GOD in his whole frame. Besides the power of the voice in forming, and of the ear in distinguishing, musical sounds, there is a general sense or sympathetic feeling in the fibres and membranes of the human body, which renders the whole frame susceptible of musical emotion. Every person strongly touched with music, must be assured that its effect is not confined to the ear, but is felt all over the frame, and to the inmost affections of the heart; disposing us to joy and thankfulness on the one hand, or to penitential softness on the other†." And if harmony have this influence over our spirits by its natural power, by the bare efficacy of sounds, when separate from sense and signification, in a more exalted degree by the organ†, —that noblest of all musical combinations, through the manifold application of pipes and stops, in its fullest compass, and most soothing modulations, or in the command of both in the rising and declension of its swelling movement,—if, I repeat, harmony thus separate from sense and signification can command and subdue the spirit, how much greater efficacy must it have when it is adapted to high and heavenly matter, and that matter arranged and measured by poetic numbers, the bare recital of which is known to make an impression upon

* Is. xxx. 29.

† W. JONES.

‡ The earliest of which, in the West of Europe, was that sent by the Emperor Constantine to Pepin, in 757.

the mind, superior to music; such as the spiritual poems dispersed throughout the Scriptures, all the produce of inspiration, whether they be the compositions of Moses or of David, or uttered by the voice of angels.

This captivating influence of harmony combined with verse, is experienced and acknowledged by most men, to whatever place they resort. In the heathen inhabitants of Colosse, (would that it were never so in Christian communities!) it had been degraded and desecrated to evil purposes. But that was, and is, the perversion and prostitution of the best things. The true and original design of them was to record, to thank, and to praise the Almighty. Those "famous men," alluded to by the son of Sirach, who "found out musical tunes, and recited verses in writing*," designed both for the service of the sanctuary, and they are most powerful auxiliaries in the house of prayer, to awaken and promote piety, to comfort and edify the people of GOD. They are of constant advantage to the devotion of those who frequent the place of worship from a sense of duty; and they have unexpectedly produced the conversion of some, (subject to the operation of the HOLY SPIRIT,) who had only visited it out of curiosity. The power of heavenly harmony, breaking through their hardened infidelity or indifference has been permitted to soften them into shame and contrition.

These cases may be *accidental* and *extraordinary*; but yet the *ordinary* influence of music in churches, where the organ leads the congregation and covers many defects of the voice, is great and profitable. It is known to have brought many of all conditions and inclinations to the place of worship, who otherwise would have gone to no

* Ecclus. xliv. 5.

divine service at all; and others (who, at first, had gone from the unhallowed motive of mere pleasure,) have in the course of time attended upon principle; “weaker minds being, by the delight of the ear, elevated to the real affection of piety*.”

The practice of introducing instrumental music into divine worship, is of very great antiquity. So early as the days of the deliverance of the Israelites by the destruction of Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, “Moses and the children of Israel sang their song unto the LORD;” and “Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel,” being a drum with bells about it, or tambourine, in her hand, and said, “Sing ye to the LORD, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.”

This is the most ancient song on record; although, from the manner in which it is expressed, it is evident that it had then been long the practice to sing and use musical instruments in the worship of ALMIGHTY God.

Other inspired persons imitated the hymns of Moses†, but they were brought to perfection by David, “the man after God’s own heart.” He was admirably skilful in this science, was the inventor of some musical instruments himself‡, the incomparable and inspired composer of most of those holy psalms which bear his name, and which gained him the appellation of “the Sweet Psalmist of Israel §.”

This practice, which prevailed among the faithful for many ages during the old covenant, was continued by

* ST. AUGUSTINE, *Confess.*
mos vi. 5.

† See Judges v. 1 Sam. ii.
§ 2 Sam. xxiii. 1.

the Christian disciples under the new. Of this the words selected for the text, as well as other passages of holy Scripture, are a sufficient testimony; particularly the words of the Gospels, which record that our blessed Saviour, when He had finished the passover, in which He instituted the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, concluded the sacred service with a hymn.

The sanction thus given by CHRIST himself to the use of harmony in the divine offices, has been followed up by the faithful in all succeeding ages. And with the *practice*, how diligent, my brethren, ought *we* to be to continue also the devout affection! How assiduous, not merely to use the organ, (that which surpasses all the instruments combined ever known to Israel,) and to lift the voice, but to "sing with *grace* in our hearts unto the LORD."

That both these may be united in offering up an acceptable service to the Almighty, let me endeavour to render my discourse effective, by taking two points into consideration :

1. The outward manner of performing it; and
2. The inward state or frame of mind proper for the performers themselves.

Bear with me then, I entreat you, whilst I consider what may appear to me to be the proper method of conducting the *outward* performance.

As in the *prayers* which we offer up to the Sovereign LORD of the whole earth, becoming expressions are selected with which to address so great a Majesty; so ought we to be careful to lift up our *praises* in language fitted to that part of our devotions.

For this reason the Church of England has always preferred and authorized either the Psalms of David or

words taken out of Scripture; because they were dictated by divine inspiration. They who use these words, adopt the language of the HOLY SPIRIT, which, on that great account, we assure ourselves, are most agreeable to the Supreme Being, our Redeemer and LORD.

Hence it is easy to infer that any hymn, which is merely the composition of man, and which has not a direct connection with the Word of GOD; which is only the product of human genius, or which expresses the mere feelings of him who has produced it, should never be introduced into divine service without the most mature and deliberate examination of the sentiments and language which form the composition.

Our Church, after her great and judicious Reformation, seems to have had some apprehension that her members might err in this respect, (even in translating and expressing the original language of the Psalms,) since only two versions of those divine writings have ever been adopted by her; the one by authority of the Head of our Church, the other by early and constant usage. We act, therefore, more in conformity with the regimen of our established communion, when we make use of them in our public worship, in our usual parochial congregations.

Other selections are gathered from holy Scripture, which are not written in metre, but to which the power of harmony is applied. These are Chants and Anthems, adapted to our cathedrals. Chants are of great antiquity, so much so, that there is some reason for believing that the alternate recitation or singing of psalms was a practice prevailing in the Jewish offices in the time of David, and afterwards, in the holy Temple.

But whether the practice be of such high antiquity or not, we learn from the ecclesiastical historian, Theo-

doret *, that it was introduced into the Church of Antioch by Flavianus and Diodorus, before the year 400, and thence spread itself, as it were, by general consent, throughout the Christian World†. The words chanted, as well as the words of anthems, being both the very words of Scripture, must be acceptable to the religious mind. But then, with regard to the manner in which anthems are sometimes set, passages may possibly be so very often repeated, as to destroy the force and expression of the words, and lose the effect they would otherwise have upon our devotions—except in the chorus, where the repetition renders the subject the more emphatic.

In selections of airs adapted to the different versions of the Psalms, a great improvement has been made in modern times; but they might be rendered yet more useful if they were to point out to the performer the particular words for which each air was originally designed. For sacred tunes, not being composed according to the unrestrained fancy of the musician, but to express the meaning and beauty of the Psalm which, at the time, occupied his attention, excited his feelings, and controlled his taste; those notes will always express the meaning and words of the Psalm then before him with the best emphasis and effect, and, consequently, will produce in the hearer the greater delight and edification.

A judicious reader, versed in elocution, will give weight to every passage according to the meaning it is intended to express; and, as two sentences are scarcely

* THEODORET, lib. ii., c. 24. “Φλαβιανος και Διοδωρος, &c. . . . Ουτοι πρώτοι διχη διαλοντες τοις τῶν ψαλλόντων χοροις, εκ διαδοχῆς ᾄδειν την Δαυϊτικην ἐδίδαξαν μελωδιαν, και τοῦτο εν Αντιοχείᾳ πρωτον ἀρξάμενον, παντοσε διεδραμε, και κατέλαβε της οἰχουμενης τα τερματα. See VALERIUS' edit. of THEODORET, Paris, 1673, p. 107.

† See PATRICK, *Pref. to B.*

ever alike, the tone of his voice will be continually varying, to avoid monotony and dulness, and enable him to convey the meaning to the hearer with proper force and impression. Music, especially sacred music, is only a more engaging method of communicating the sense of words to those employed about them, and must continually fail to be what it was designed to be, if arbitrarily applied to other words, or words not similar to those for which it was expressly composed.

Thus, much care and judgment should be exercised in selecting what is best calculated for our edification. Much also in choosing verses adapted to the Sunday or the occasion on which the service is performed. In urging this method we are only pressing upon your notice the exhortation of the royal and pious musician of Israel, "to sing praises with *understanding*."

Another point much to be regarded is the choice of such music as is within the compass of the voices which constitute the choir; such as may enable the vocal and instrumental efforts to be blended together so as that the whole performance may be said with truth to be "melody unto the LORD."

For this purpose, in country parishes, (it is otherwise in a cathedral,) the plainest music is to be preferred to that which is difficult and complicated. Every person in the congregation, who has the power, may there lift up his voice in praise and thanksgiving to the LORD his Maker. And "when that is done with propriety and judgment, it has a most exalted and edifying effect. It forms one of the grandest scenes of unaffected piety that human nature can afford*." It warms, and cheers, and elevates the soul both of them who use, and them who

* See author of a *Dissertation on Music and Poetry*.

hear it. And if any of you, my brethren, have ever been present at the annual great Assembly of the Charity Children in the Cathedral of St. Paul, and have listened to their seven thousand voices all at once lifting up the psalm of thanksgiving and glory to the great LORD of Heaven and Earth, their Redeemer and Sanctifier, their Almighty Protector, and All-merciful Friend, you will be convinced of the propriety and justness of this commendation.

Hard, indeed, must the heart of that man be, who, on that occasion, is not roused to some sense of devotion; and no Christian, whose temperament is at all sensitive, can ever be present in that assembly, without feeling an elevation of spirit, prompting him to send forth devout aspirations to the Throne of Grace.

By thus acting in concord, we shall pursue one method of fulfilling the precept of the Apostle, and teach and "admonish one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs."

From considering the outward manner of conducting this interesting part of public worship, we advert to the *frame of mind* proper for those who engage in it.

The text supplies us with the instruction requisite: "Sing with *grace* in your hearts unto the LORD."

Like every other, this part also of divine service must be performed "in spirit and in truth." This was as essentially necessary in the Jewish, as it now is in the Christian Church. "O God," said David, "*my heart is ready, my heart is ready.* I will sing and give praise with the best member that I have;" or, as it is in the Bible translation, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early," or, "awaken the morning," thus "declaring his

heart to be prepared to celebrate its future enlargement, and calling upon his tongue, with all his instruments of music, all the organs of the body and affections of the soul, to unite their powers in sweetest harmony and concert, and to awaken the sluggish morning with the voice of melody, sounding forth the glories of redemption *.” Without *this*, the most harmonious composer, the most flexible and expert vocalist, even “the Sweet Psalmist of Israel” himself, would be no other, nor better than the mere instrument in his hand. Without real piety, as well as charity of heart and affection, although he be the most devout, although even he should sing the song of angels, he would be (St. Paul declares) “as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.” For the lips, the tongue, or the voice are merely *instrumental* in praising the Most High. It is the *soul*, like the blessed Virgin’s, that must “*magnify* the LORD;” it is the *spirit* that must “rejoice in GOD our Saviour;” although it accomplish it with organs furnished by the GOD of Nature, or those constructed by the art of man.

When we consider to *whom* we lift up our voice, this portion of our subject cannot surely fail to make a *deep impression* upon every person who engages in that part of our sacred service which is devoted to *thanksgiving*. When he is mindful that he then rises up to stand before the LORD his Maker, his present Redeemer and Sanctifier, and his future Judge—in whose word is acquittal or condemnation—in whose hand is reward or punishment, shall he suffer melody to proceed from his *tongue* whilst bitterness, sin, and discord are rankling in his *heart*? or will he raise his eyes towards heaven whilst his breast is *obdurate*, feeling no compunction for his offences, and not

* See HORNE, Ps. lvii. 7, 8.

deigning to confess his transgressions to the LORD! This would be utterly incongruous. The *disposition* must, therefore, be previously regulated and reformed. He must be able with truth to assert, "My foot standeth right," before he can say in sincerity, "I will praise the LORD in the congregation."

To acquire this great and necessary frame of mind, how admirably is our excellent Liturgy constructed! It will not acknowledge us to be in a fit state to "sing unto the LORD," until upon our knees we have made an humble confession of our sins, and earnestly implored of our "Almighty and most merciful Father," pardon and forgiveness. For the penitent only, and they who *seek* for grace in and through the merits and mediation of JESUS CHRIST, are fit to "celebrate his praise," or "do unto Him true and laudable service."

Whilst, therefore, those who take a part in that portion of the service to which the organ so materially contributes its powerful and impressive aid, instruct themselves in such music as is essential for that holy purpose; let them devoutly pray for *grace* to perform it *acceptably* unto GOD: let them be exemplary in their *lives*, as true disciples of JESUS CHRIST: let them and other Christians especially avoid those sins against which the Apostle directed his exhortation, namely, all conversation tending to corrupt the heart; all licentious and immoral compositions, such as those were which prevailed in Colosse before the introduction of that knowledge which *was* to make, and still *does* make men wise unto salvation.

And here let us not omit to remark that, which is of the highest importance both to the choristers and congregation in general, namely, the frequent recurrence of the choir service, which is apt in our imperfect state to generate inattention, and a careless mode of performing

our respective duties at the time of divine worship, interrupting the great design of the *daily* service, which is to carry on the offering up of our sacrifice of prayer and praise, morning and evening; and, to make it acceptable to God, it must (as I have stated) be an offering from the heart and mind. A mere lip service cannot be acceptable to the LORD, who looketh not so much at the outward act, as on the inward sincerity and intention. Yet our *outward* actions, at that solemn hour, must also be such as to convey to every observer the inward frame and temper of the soul. And we cannot too strongly urge upon those persons who compose the choir, the necessity of putting themselves on their guard against any inclination to carelessness or indifference in the performance of their respective duties. They should remember that the eye of God and man is upon them; and any want of serious attention on their parts is not only offensive to the great God of heaven, but it brings also discredit upon the religion which they profess. It affords the infidel and the scoffer the opportunity of pointing out the little effect the faith which they avow has upon their feelings and practice; and, at the same time it afflicts the sincere and the devout.

That they may the more readily obtain and preserve these necessary qualifications of the outward and inward man, let me lastly fix their and all our attention upon the opening passage of the text, as containing that which is the only source of true wisdom, and only guide to truth. "Let the *word* of God dwell in you *richly* in all wisdom." Let the doctrine which CHRIST taught and which He inspired his apostles to teach, be constantly in your recollection, so that, being ever present to your thoughts, it may ever influence your conduct.

For you, my younger brethren, children of CHRIST's

spouse, the Church, dear in his sight, and objects of his loving-kindness, well may you be objects of our interest and our care. Receive, then, the exhortation of an elder, conveyed to you with an elder brother's *love*. God has given you voices capable of serving Him with the offering of praise and thanksgiving; you are infants by the course of nature,—infants in the knowledge of CHRIST's word,—yet, when the ear ears you, then it blesses you; may your *conduct* be such, as that our *hearts* may bless you also. Oh! may God give you *grace*, that the spirit within you be rightly fixed on Him. Pray for that grace daily and privately, morning and evening.

You are placed in His choir on earth; may you, in His own good time, be exalted to the heavenly choir, the ten thousand times ten thousand whom the Apostle John heard, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come*."

"Thou art worthy, O LORD, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created†."

"Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever‡."

"Allelujah! salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the LORD our God§."

Happy will you then be, beloved children, in the presence of your merciful and glorified Redeemer! happy beyond what I can express, or you conceive. For you will behold Him turning his benignant countenance upon you (if you shall but have served Him *faithfully*), and will hear Him say to *you*, as He did to

* Rev. i. 8. † Ib. 11. ‡ Ib. vii. 12. § Ib. xix. 1.

his former Disciples, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." In other words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

That you may attain this final and transcendant happiness, GOD in his mercy grant, through JESUS CHRIST our Lord; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all praise and thanksgiving, now and for evermore.

THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

BY THE

REV. W. J. THORNTON,

PREBENDARY OF HEREFORD, RURAL DEAN, AND RECTOR OF LLANWARNE,
HEREFORDSHIRE.

ST. JOHN v. 14.

*Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse
thing come unto thee.*

THE evils of life are so numerous, and they press with so much weight on the human mind, that the language of complaint is more common than the expression of any other feeling. Whether we look around or within, whether we regard those misfortunes which arise out of our own sin and folly, or those which we think we may attribute to the conduct of others, the vexations which belong to this state are so various, that man appears to be indeed "born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

Some vexations, however, are more severely felt than others. Some affect the whole of a man's life, while others give way to more pleasing impressions. Some, perhaps, involve only himself, others, the whole of his family. The spirit of a man will, at times, bear his infirmity, while at other seasons he feels disposed to sink under his affliction, and to imagine that if in this life only he had hope, he would be of all men most miserable.

It is not only a high and heavenly wisdom as regards
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our own peace of mind, but a disposition which we may believe to be acceptable to God, to consider in any particular affliction, how much heavier a chastisement our sins have deserved, and with how much sorer a punishment the Almighty might have visited us. There is, perhaps, scarcely a single earthly evil, to which this suggestion is not applicable. In the present life, we can never be sure that a worse thing might not have come unto us.

Observations of this kind are not, perhaps, unsuitable to the subject which the text brings before our minds. In the earlier verses of the chapter, our Saviour is described as having miraculously cured a person who had been labouring for thirty-eight years in a state of hopeless disease, and as then addressing to him the words, "Behold thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

We shall best derive the instruction which this passage of Scripture is calculated to furnish, if we consider, I. the circumstances which led to the exhortation of the text; II. the exhortation itself; and III. the warning connected with that exhortation.

May the HOLY SPIRIT, my brethren, be with us, while we meditate on these words of our Redeemer; and may His teaching enable each of us to understand their solemn import. If there be any here who are suffering under bodily evils or temporal calamities, may they learn, from the subject now under our consideration, the importance of guarding lest a worse thing come unto them.

I. It appears, from the commencement of the chapter, that, in one of the public parts of Jerusalem, there was a pool or fountain of water, and that at a particular season of the year the water was miraculously stirred.

Any bodily sufferer who at once stepped in, was cured of his disease, whatever it might be; but, if he missed his opportunity, no other would occur till the yearly season returned.

In this merciful provision, we have a type of Him who is described as the "Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," and the necessity of instant attention to the things which concern ~~our~~ peace is here powerfully urged on us. The season of mercies and afflictions, the day of ordinances and means of grace, the opportunity of being impressed with a sense of eternal things, is short, and never will return. He who neglected the yearly troubling of the pool, had need to tremble lest no other season of cure were offered to him. This circumstance was well known to all, and doubtless those, who could make their way to the fountain, acted with an earnestness and a haste proportioned to the pressure of those bodily calamities under which they laboured.

This should remind us, that our day of salvation is rapidly passing away, and that to each of us "the night cometh when no man can work." The fountain which is opened for the cure of our spiritual diseases will soon be closed eternally, and then an impassable gulf will be fixed between us and all hope of heaven. Our grand business should be to seek, by God's grace, the forgiveness of our sins, the conversion of our hearts, an interest in CHRIST's salvation, and a living union with Him, before the day of salvation shall pass away for ever.

It appears that the person addressed in the text was too weak and exhausted to gain admittance for himself, and that those around him were either unable to assist him, or were perhaps fearful of his depriving them of cure by stepping in first, and therefore refused to aid him. It is one of the evils of any earthly suffering, but

probably of sickness more than of any other calamity, that it frequently weakens the temper and destroys the spirits, and thus brings on a feeling of selfishness which renders men insensible to any sufferings but their own. This is a temptation against which those who suffer from bodily infirmity should especially guard. They are seldom aware how greatly disease tries the forbearance of those around the patient, as well as the patient himself; and none but those who have had the melancholy experience of attending in the chamber of sickness can be aware how greatly forbearance and consideration are there needed on all sides. Those in health seldom know how many trials of patience arise from the wear and pressure of lingering disease, and the sick are often unconscious of the unreasonable character of their demands and complaints. The duty of bearing each other's burdens should not be forgotten on either side.

Another lesson to be drawn from this part of our subject, is to observe the effect which the Gospel has had in exciting a feeling of pity for those who suffer under bodily distress. There is no mention in heathen times and countries of any public institution for the relief of bodily infirmity. It is only in the precepts of that dispensation which brought life and immortality to light, that we are taught to weep with them that weep, to succour the distresses of others, and to remember those who in this transitory life are in trouble, need, sickness, or any other adversity, as being ourselves also in the body.

This part of the story may further teach us how sinful it is to press our own claims on the attention of others, so as to hinder and exclude those who may be in greater destitution, but may not have the same power, or perhaps the same anxiety, to bring their concerns

under the notice of their richer neighbours. It is by no means the case that those who most urge their own wants and merits, are in reality the most destitute or deserving. Those who possess the means of relieving distress will do well to consider, not so much the loudness, as the justice, of the complaint; and for want of attention to this, it often happens that the poor and needy go away ashamed, while those who have greater boldness, or more cunning, step in before them, exactly as at the pool of Bethesda, the greatest sufferer was left unassisted and uncured.

We may next notice the conduct of our Lord towards this person. He bestowed on him a cure, which was unexpected and unsolicited, but at the same time, complete and immediate. He does not, however, at once break in upon those feelings of joy which would naturally be raised in his mind, but He gives him leisure to reflect on the mercy vouchsafed, before He presses on him the solemn responsibility thereby incurred to devote the health thus restored, and the life thus extended, to the glory of God, and to the working out of his own salvation.

However desirable it may be to awaken sinners to a consideration of their sin and danger, it will always be proper to make choice of a suitable opportunity. There are often particular seasons which might be improved for this purpose, and those whose minds are impressed by the importance of eternal things, will seek for some favourable occasion to urge upon others the value of spiritual blessings. It is not of every word that may be uttered, but of that which is spoken "in season," that Solomon says, "How good is it!"

We shall also do well to notice the conduct of CHRIST in retiring from the presence of this person as soon as

the cure was effected. Most men, when they confer an obligation, love to hear themselves thanked and applauded. CHRIST "went about doing good," not that men might think or speak highly of His power or His mercy, but from a wish to remove earthly evils from their path, and thus lead them to apply to Him for the cure of their diseased souls. His maxim and His practice were in this respect alike: "When thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret."

II. Having waited for a favourable opportunity, when the first feeling of joy at the recovery of health should leave this person at liberty to attend to more serious concerns, our Lord, finding him in the Temple, addresses to him the exhortation of the text, "Sin no more."

He first, however, reminds him of his cure; "Behold, thou art made whole." Considering how greatly bodily sickness is calculated to prevent our running the race which is set before us, we certainly do wisely to make it a matter of prayer to God, that He would deliver us from plague and pestilence, and that He would succour all those who labour under bodily pain and infirmity. In the more distressing and severe maladies to which our nature is subject, it is seldom easy to draw off the mind of the sufferer from his earthly agonies, or to make him anxious for any other blessing than that of a speedy and effectual deliverance from them. When the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, it is difficult to fix the mind on unseen things, or to direct the thoughts to that effectual application to the great Atonement which can alone warrant the hope that a saving change has taken place. GOD forbid that we should despair of any man, or that any man should despair of himself; but the instance of the impenitent thief is an awful proof of

the possibility which there is, that signs and wonders, a crucified Redeemer, and an open grave, may fail to produce any real conversion, and that even the hour of death is by no means of necessity a fit or effectual season to prepare for the day of judgment.

Hence it is especially to those that have been made whole that our Lord would address the exhortation, "Sin no more."

It is not anywhere mentioned of this person that he had been eminently or habitually sinful, nor shall we be warranted in concluding more respecting him, than that bodily disease had hitherto prevented his paying due attention to his chief infirmities and temptations, and to his resisting the sin that most easily beset him. This appears to be the natural and reasonable interpretation of what our Lord said to him, which at any rate intimated, that whatever excuses might have been made for him when the flesh was weak, the return of health and strength should put him on watching against his peculiar sins, so that, with the assistance and direction of God's heavenly grace, he might now obtain a victory over the infirmities of temper and of conduct, over every lust of the flesh or spirit.

And be it remembered, that the voice which speaks in the text is still addressed to each of us, and that especially to those who have been delivered from accident or sickness, it says, in a tone not to be mistaken, "Sin no more."

"But this," it may be urged, "is an hard saying. The world, the flesh, and the Devil, are strong enemies. He who is sanctified by the HOLY GHOST may be delivered from presumptuous transgressions, but as regards secret faults, who can tell how oft he offendeth?"

In what way, then, are we to interpret this command,

so as not to contradict the declaration that there is not a just man upon earth that sinneth not?

When we are told that whoever has a well-founded hope in CHRIST, purifieth himself even as CHRIST is pure, that whosoever is born of God, doth not, and cannot, commit sin, that we are to be holy as God Himself is holy, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, no doubt many serious misgivings will enter our minds when we put to ourselves the solemn question, "Who is sufficient for these things?" When we consider the subtilty, the power, the malice, and the number, of our spiritual enemies, we might well tremble at the task which is assigned us, and ask, with the Disciples, "Who, then, can be saved?"

If we are to fulfil the injunction of the text, we must take to ourselves the whole armour of God; we must be diligent in the use of means, earnest in the improvement of ordinances, guarded in our walk and conversation, and watchful against whatever might cause us to offend. In this way we shall show our anxiety to sin no more, our desire to be kept from transgression, our earnestness in resisting whatever is displeasing to God, and our resolution, that, by His grace assisting us, sin shall not reign in our mortal bodies. In this way we may reasonably and scripturally expect, not indeed that every sinful disposition will in this life be entirely and finally extinguished, but that the prevailing desire of our hearts will be to depart from evil. Some sins, the effect of sudden temptation or of temporary inadvertence, will still cling to the nature of all men; but where the dailiness of sin is followed by the dailiness of repentance, there will be an evidence that sin is less and less influential over the heart and life, and that fleshly and earthly desires, though not entirely subjected, are still in the process of

being crucified, an expression powerfully suited to point out to us the nature of that mortification which must take place in the works of the flesh. Crucifixion was not a sudden and instantaneous, or even a rapid death. It required much preparation, and occupied much time, before the gradual work of extinction even began; it was attended not only by disgrace and humiliation, but by a long continuance of bodily torment.

Such will be the nature of that mighty working, by which CHRIST will subdue to Himself our evil lusts and inclinations. It will not be by one effort, but by a patient and persevering anxiety, that we shall obtain a fixed and rooted resolution to sin no more, and become utterly purposed that our thoughts, and words, and deeds shall not offend. In this way we may expect to sin no more against light and knowledge, to sin no more with any relish or desire for sin, to sin no more wilfully and intentionally, to sin no more beyond casual and unperceived, sudden and occasional transgressions. Those sins which are the effect of error, of haste, of negligence, of forgetfulness, should no doubt be diligently guarded against, lest they lead to a more deliberate and entire departure from the living GOD, and even against these he who is sincere will watch, and strive, and pray, endeavouring by GOD's grace to establish within his heart the dominion of purity and holiness, and thus to destroy the reign and power of the wicked one.

III. And what is the consideration by which our Lord presses the solemn injunction? He reminds the object of His mercy of the restoration lately vouchsafed to him, and it is intimated that a due sense of this mercy ought to fix in his heart an unfeigned thankfulness, so that, in what remained of his earthly pilgrimage, he should show forth GOD's praise, not only with his lips, but in his life,

by giving himself up to God's service, and walking before Him in righteousness and holiness. But our Lord did not content Himself with the suggestion of past mercies. He speaks also of future terrors. In the hurry and anxiety of earthly things, and with that keener desire for them which returning health would excite, the remembrance of sickness and pain might be lost, and in the gift of health, the Giver of it might be entirely forgotten, our Lord bids him look from the past to the future, and reflect on the possibility which there was that, much as he had known of distress and vexation, greater evils might yet remain.

"Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." To a person who had been for thirty-eight years in a state of bodily helplessness and pain, who had exhausted the compassion of every friend, and who according to human judgment could only look to death as a release from his sufferings, whom successive disappointments must have rendered hopeless of earthly cure or earthly comfort,—to such a person the words "a worse thing" must have raised some emotions not only of terror, but of surprise. In what state of existence a man could be worse, or what greater evils could assail him, must for the moment have seemed difficult to conjecture.

The danger at which our Lord here glanced, but which He did not describe in words, must have been that final and awful danger of being so abandoned to the things of this world, as to lose sight of those interests which belong to our peace hereafter. He whose life has been prolonged only to add sin to sin, who has been rescued from bodily danger only to persevere in negligence of religion till iniquity prove his ruin, may discover in the world to come that a continuance of bodily pain, or even the dissolution of his earthly tabernacle, would

have been a mercy in comparison with his deliverance from sickness or danger. If it be better for us that one or all of our members should perish under lingering disease, than that our whole body should be cast into hell, it is clear that a worse thing may come unto us than any misery which disease or accident can inflict. To sink by degrees under the pressure of a lingering malady, to feel that the outward man is yielding to the effects, not of a good old age, but of gradual and inevitable decay, to realise the awful language of the Patriarch, "I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust, my face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death," is a condition of things which may well excite pity even in the hardened and the selfish.

But it was not from such miseries as these that our Lord came upon earth to rescue us. He came to save us from a worse thing, from that state of spiritual disease which so destroys the faculties of its victims, that seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, the things that are needful for them before they can enter into life. It was for the restoration of immortal spirits that were sunk in the death of sin, that He preached, and laboured, and died. It was for the strengthening and refreshing, not of vile bodies, but of imperishable souls, that He instituted that ordinance, in which, so often as we duly receive it, we shall obtain a spiritual nourishment, and an heavenly banquet. In that ordinance we are taught, by the value of the price paid for our redemption, the extent of that evil, the bitterness of that worse thing than any human suffering, from which the salvation of CHRIST is designed to rescue us. There our views and thoughts will be raised beyond the boundaries of this life, beyond the sinkings and agonies of death, beyond earthly sepa-

rations and earthly dissolutions, to that deliverance from the bitter pains of eternal death, for which this ordinance will prepare us, and which, in health and sickness, in joy and pain, and in all the changes and chances of this life, should ever be the object of our thoughts. In proportion as we become convinced that life has no length, and eternity no end, in proportion as we see the unspeakable value of our souls, and the nearness and importance of those things which must shortly come to pass, we shall be actuated by an influential fear of a worse thing than can happen to us in this world. Believing that whatever can harden our hearts, or fix them on things below, will expose us to the danger of this worse thing, we shall direct our chief thoughts to the attainment of that grace by which alone we can hope that our last state shall not be worse than the first. The crafts and assaults of the Devil, a blinded heart, a love of the pleasures, honours, or riches of this world, will be more dreaded by us than the loss of the eye or the limb that would offend. In this persuasion and godly fear, may we labour to make our calling and election sure, in increased deliverance from sin, in increased watchfulness against temptation, in a growing preference for the things of eternity, in an advancing knowledge and love of God. In this faith and hope may we endeavour to work out that awful task which is assigned us, for thus and thus alone can we reasonably hope so to pass through things temporal, as not finally to lose the things eternal.

FISHERS OF MEN.

A SERMON

PREACHED DECEMBER 9, 1845, IN WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL,

*In aid of the Societies for the Propagation of the Gospel, and
for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge.*

BY THE

REV. RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH, M.A.,

VICAR OF ITCHEN STONE:

AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD.

ST. LUKE v. 10.

*And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth
thou shalt catch men.*

I NEED scarcely, I think, remind you, my brethren, of the circumstances under which these words were spoken. The Lord had taken refuge from the pressure of the multitude in Peter's boat; from thence He had taught the people, and the teaching being ended, had bidden his future apostle to launch out into the deep, and to let down his nets for a draught. He, with the beginnings of no weak faith already working in him, had made answer, "Master, we have toiled all night and have taken nothing; nevertheless, at *thy* word I will let down the net." And his reliance on that word was abundantly justified by the event; they now enclosed so many fishes that their nets brake, and hardly with the assistance of their partners in the other ship could they secure them all. But this being effected, Peter, who now perceived, in part at least, with whom he had to do, even with the Holy One of God, and who, in the near presence of that Holy One, felt his own sinfulness and defilement as he

had never done before, fell down at JESUS' feet, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord;" not that he indeed wished Him to depart, but that these were the first words which came up, by which he could express his sense of the greatness of the gulf which separated him a sinner, and the heavenly visitant, in whose presence he found himself." And then follow the reassuring words, and the promise of a nobler vocation which henceforward should be his: "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men;" or in the words of the other Evangelists, addressed to him and to his fellows, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Now, brethren, I have taken this little history, and especially the latest words of it, the words of CHRIST our Lord—words which we have full right to consider as spoken, not to Peter only, but to the Church of all ages—for my subject upon this day, because they contain so much that will yield profitable matter of meditation for ourselves at a season like the present, and engaged in such a work as ours. They tell us, first, what the office of the Church is, how great, how noble,—to catch *men*, to take *men* within the folds of the Gospel net; and they give us, secondly, all encouragement for this work which we can need; in that they assure us that it is CHRIST's will that his servants should be so engaged; they let down their nets at his bidding;—his sufficiency, which will equip them for the work; He will *make* them fishers of men;—his word and promise that their labour shall not be in vain; they shall not merely fish *for* men, but they shall *catch* them: they shall *bring in* the harvest of the sea. Such, brethren, is the plan and order of the subject matter which I desire, with God's blessing, to bring under your consideration to-day.

And first, when the Lord said to Peter and his com-

panions, "I will make you fishers of men," there was a double magnifying of his future vocation. Not the dumb creatures of the deep;—not the poor timid wanderers through the paths of sea;—not these should be his prey any more; his henceforward should be a nobler booty, it should be men, souls, heirs of immortality, creatures made in the image of God, beings capable of knowing and of loving Him, of being made equal to the angels, of standing upon the steps of his throne, and rejoicing in the light of his countenance for ever. And then not merely should he take men, but he should take them *for life*, for so much in the original word is implied. Thou shalt take men for life, hitherto thou hast caught thy meaner prey only for death, they were taken from the water in which they lived, into the air, an element alien to them, in which they needs must presently expire; but now all shall be reversed; those only shall live who are taken within the folds of thy net, whom thou bringest up from the deep waters of the world into the light of the everlasting day.

And such is always the office of the Church,—to take men; it lays itself out for souls: its dignity and honour is, that it is a ministry appointed for the salvation of men. For this the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was cast into the sea, that it gathers men within its folds. And as it takes them, so it takes them for life; those that were wandering up and down in the world as in the great deep, full of whirlpools, full of fears, full of turbulent unrest, those it takes as in a blessed captivity, and they do not die, but live because they are so taken; they rejoice to find themselves encompassed by these Gospel nets, and would not for worlds exchange their present captivity for the dreary liberty which before was theirs; for they know that *this* is life, and *that* was death.

Such, then, brethren, is the high function whereunto CHRIST has appointed his Church, as expressed in our text,—to take men, and to take them for life, even for life eternal. But it is introduced, as you will observe, Peter is inaugurated to his work, with a “Fear not,” and this too most fitly here finding place; for surely next to being engaged in a work *against* GOD, it is the most awful thing to be engaged in a work *with* Him—to be fellow-workers with GOD, and they who have never needed this “Fear not,” as they have heard his summons unto this, are in greatest danger of offering unhallowed fire upon his altar—of propping up his Ark with profane and audacious hands. Those words of St. Peter, that “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man,” however little we should choose to clothe the confession of our unworthiness, the sense of our defilement, in a like form, however now we have been better taught than to ask *Him* to leave us who only can *help* us, yet in the main are the utterance of that which every man must pass through, who is to do any great work for the LORD. Ever when GOD is about to send men forth to some signal work for Him, He makes them to pass through a decisive moment such as this—a moment in which the earthly grows pale before the heavenly—in which man stands as nothing before GOD, that so whatever GOD may hereafter bring about by his hand, he may acknowledge to be of GOD, and not of himself. He that is to preach for the winning of souls, is first an Isaiah, with his “Woe is me, I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips;”—a Paul, lying upon his face, “trembling and astonished,” before the blinding light, which is the herald of a true illumination; he that is to see some great sight of the glory of GOD, is first a John falling at his Lord’s feet as one dead;—a

Daniel, in whom at the great vision vouchsafed to him, there has remained no strength;—a Peter, who, under the overwhelming sense of his own corruption, has *almost* been tempted to say “Depart from me,” and has quite said, and out of the very deep of his heart, “I am a sinful man, O Lord!”

Nor otherwise may it be with the Church, or with any members of it, when they set themselves to any great and earnest service of the living God, such as that which we undertake when we undertake the spreading of the knowledge of his name here, and to the ends of the earth. We too must stand in awe of the work unto which we have addressed ourselves; we too must need that re-assuring “Fear not,” when we consider who we are that serve, and whom it is that we serve.

But then, too, see in this saying of CHRIST’s, other words of a yet stronger encouragement for us, engaged in such a work as ours,—“*I will make you fishers of men,*” so that we may ever feel that *we* let down our nets at his bidding, that this missionary exertion, be it at home or abroad, be it for the recovering of our own outcasts, or for the gathering in of those yet alien to the faith of CHRIST; that this missionary activity is not something merely which the Church has concluded from the natural fitness of things that she ought to undertake, but that she undertakes it upon surer grounds, upon better promises,—at the express word, by the distinct bidding of her Lord, who bids her, undeterred even by long nights of toil and unrewarded travail, if such should come, to let down her nets again and again for a draught, and pledges Himself for an ample blessing in the end.

For this is the mightiest encouragement of all which
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are contained in these words of our blessed Lord's, namely,—that we are not merely fishers *for* men, but fishers *of* men, that we shall *take* them; by the mighty yet secret magic of his will, He will bring them within the folds of our net, if only we will cast it boldly and unweariedly into the great waters of the world; and we too shall enclose a great multitude, such as shall as much outrun our expectation, as much shame our poor and petty hopes, as did the multitudinous creatures of the deep, which rewarded the obedience of St. Peter.

And when I thus speak, it is not as though we of the English Church had hitherto taken nothing, had hitherto laboured in vain, as though all our success were in prospect. On the contrary, in more quarters than one we have already exchanged the long night of toil for nets so encumbered, that we know not how safely to secure all which has been brought within their folds. Who can read our later reports from India, those of four or five years since, of a kindred society, and tidings later yet from one which especially occupies us to-day; who can read these and not feel that instead of having now to confess to fruitless toil, rather we are encumbered, as was Peter at the last, with the greatness of our success, with the vast harvest of the sea, which has been brought for our ingathering? So far from having now to lament over labours without fruit, we have rather need to lament over the many who, once brought within our nets, are yet in danger of escaping from their broken folds again into the wide sea, into the great ocean of an evil world, where is that Leviathan, who is ever seeking to devour them, and where are a thousand perils from which they seemed to have escaped. And they that have the oversight of the matter, so far from feeling that they have already enough of hands for

securing any booty which may reward their toil, are rather earnestly beckoning to us, that we should come and aid them, that we should lend them an helping hand, lest they should fail to secure and bring to shore the great multitudes, whom the providence of God has brought within their reach, that they might gather them into vessels for eternal life. For are not all the later communications from the Bishops of India, of New Zealand, of North America, of this character; are they not, one and all, an earnest beckoning to us that we should not leave them unhelped? Are they not all, while full of hope, yet full also of an infinite sorrow? And how should it not be so, when they, the chief watchers over the flock, the chief fishers in the sea, behold the many that are slipping away from them, and whom, but for lack of hands, they might have secured for ever,—colonists, that become separatists perforce, that yearn with a yearning, which long years are not able to extinguish, after the Church of their fathers, and whose yearnings remain ungratified still;—catechumens in heathen lands, or indeed hardly catechumens, for there are scarcely any to catechise them, but inquirers after the way of life,—of whom yet there is all danger, that if there be none to lead them on unto perfection, they may be drawn back into the darkness of their old heathenism once more.

And even if we did not thus see our tokens, if the LORD did not thus by many infallible proofs give gracious signs of his presence in the midst of us, yet surely there were nothing in the past course of Christian missions, as compared with their present, to discourage us on this account. Sometimes, when we read of the great things which God has done in times of old, of this nation brought into the fold, of that land made obedient to the

cross of CHRIST, we are tempted to think that his hand is shortened now, and that for one cause or another He works not now as He did once. Now these thoughts, so far as they lead to earnest self-proving, to a deep humiliation, cannot but be good; and yet, on the other hand, it must not be forgotten that commonly we read but of the glorious issue, and not of all which went before and prepared that issue; and thus we are tempted to exaggerate the swiftness with which the work in other days was accomplished. But if we look closer, we shall find that the Gospel never, save perhaps at its first outbreak, ran like wildfire over the earth. Only the walls of Jericho fell down at a shout; the other cities of the enemy had each to be taken by sap and storm. Thus we read of Sweden, that it took three hundred years of constant missionary exertion ere it changed altogether its bloody rites for the Gospel of peace and purity; and in Germany, how many had gone forth, and toiled, and prayed, and preached, and wept, and bled, (I am not speaking by conjecture, but of what we know,) ere Boniface went forth from his English home, and was allowed to set a crowning hand to the glorious work. And so has it been evermore; there has been first a sowing in tears, ere a reaping in joy; the work often seeming to stand still, sometimes seeming even to go backward. Some have laboured and others entered into their labours. There is many a one who has well-nigh said, We have toiled all night and have taken nothing; but whose record is on high and his work with his God,—and whose work, though he think not so, is on earth also; for as in some great building there are parts below ground and parts above ground, and those not less necessary than these, so also in all missionary work, there are those that lay foundations, and those that carry up the

superstructure, and the work unseen as needful as the work seen; for herein, too, is the saying true, that one soweth and another reapeth, but that he that soweth and he that reapeth shall in that day rejoice equally and rejoice together.

So much, brethren, in regard to the encouragements which we may find; first, in that God has manifestly blessed the work; and, secondly, that where as yet the full blessing does not appear, this is but in accordance with the law which has ever found place in his dealings; that law according to which He will try the faith, and perfect the patience, and call out the prayers, and multiply the labours, and purify the motives of his servants, ere He gives them all which they desire.

But besides the calls to exertions springing out of CHRIST's promise to us as members of his Catholic Church, and gifted as such with a new life ourselves, which we are bound to impart unto others, there are other summonses to exertion growing out of our especial position as members of the English branch of it, which I feel I should be wanting in my duty, did I fail to bring, however briefly, before you. For, brethren, while it is a charge on every Church which has known the grace of God in truth, and on every member of that Church, to spread the knowledge of the one saving name, yet from their peculiar opportunities, this charge may lie upon some individuals, and upon some Churches more than on others; and surely, if God has laid this burden solemnly upon any, it is on our Church in England. If any have need to say, she must say, "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel;"—she who rules from her island throne the seventh part of the human race, to whom much is given, and from whom much will be required. Surely, brethren, if we have listening ear, if we are able to

understand the Lord's will concerning us, we shall hear Him now saying to us, as plainly as He said to Peter in that boat on the Galilean lake, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught;" for as though all else had been too little, as though India itself had been a small thing, He has now given to us China, or least opened to us a great door, and effectual there, and is waiting to see whether we by that door will enter in. It remains for us to determine whether we will glorify Him, and so keep the greatness and grandeur which He has lent us, or whether we will glorify ourselves in these things, and lose them. If GOD rules in the kingdoms of the world, casting down one and lifting up another, honouring them that honour Him, and causing them that despised Him to be lightly esteemed; if it be thus, and all past experience has set to its seal that it is so, then it is not too much to say, that the destiny of the English nation is in the hands of the English Church, that as this is faithful, that will have continuance and a lengthening out of its tranquillity and its glory.

And then, brethren, take another consideration, which may well at this day stir us up to an earnest work for the propagation of the Gospel and the promotion of Christian knowledge, which is this:—the present is to many a day of perplexity; they have heard others question, till at last they have begun to question themselves, the very foundations on which rests the Church into which they have been baptized, and whether she has any position of her own, any ground upon which to stand. Surely, we may help to deliver some of these from their present perplexities by showing them that she is evidently accomplishing the Lord's commission. This is no evasive answer to the faithless question, "Is the LORD among us or no?" We all probably remember the man, who when

the sophist would prove to him by various subtle arguments that there was no such thing as motion, walked across the room, and so refuted him. And we have a nobler example in the same kind, I mean our blessed Lord Himself, who, to the question, "Art thou He that should come?" made no other answer than an appeal to the mighty works which He was doing. And if *we* can speak of blind eyes opened, of spiritual lepers cleansed, of dead in trespasses and sins raised to newness of life, what shall we fear? Already we can point to much, to things at home which *were* lacking and are now supplied; and abroad to daughter Churches which almost year by year are rising up, and calling their English mother blessed, and these too constituted in completeness of organization, and therefore with fulness of blessing. And what I desire for us, brethren, is that we should in these ways seek to approve ourselves more and more, till none should be able to deny that we were indeed a garden of the Lord's planting, seeing that in the midst of us the tree was growing, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

But since all these reasons combine to make it of such urgent importance that we should seek earnestly and faithfully to do the work of an evangelist at home and abroad, and to strengthen the hands of these two Societies, which gather up and give consistency to energies, which else would not know how to bestow themselves, let us very briefly consider, by way of warning, how we might hinder instead of help that work; how we might miss rather than find a blessing.

And in this way, first,—if we girded ourselves to our task, without deepest and truest confessions of past shortcoming, and past neglects. What hope is there for the future, unless we are ready to acknowledge that as

regards the past we have been verily guilty concerning our brother, have endured an heathen population, not on our borders only, and that had been much, but in our very bosom, that we awoke very slowly to our duty, and even now are very feebly performing it? What hope is there for us save that which grows out of such a humiliation as this? We cannot make good the past, but we can confess it, and have it pardoned.

And then, secondly, we may mar the work by determining that it shall be done exactly in our way, or not at all. Oh! brethren, how much of carnal, of unsubdued nature is there often in all this! What a sign does it give that we yet "walk as men," when if everything be not done precisely as we would have it, we care not whether it be done at all or not; nay, can ourselves endure to be scatterers instead of gatherers; when we are resolved that no wound shall heal, that the things which make our weakness here shall be our weakness in the ends of the earth. In this way too we might greatly hinder the work of the Lord, which we profess and believe that we are setting forward.

Or again, by doubt and despondency concerning the issues of that in which we are engaged, as though it were something to be done indeed, but with little expectation of any glorious results. Probably there are moments when we all are tempted to this, when we are well nigh tempted to believe that this world is the Devil's world and not God's; that we must let things be, that evil is too strong, that we can never win back the godless population of our own great cities, or overthrow the giant superstitions of the heathen world, when we forget that however feeble the instruments, the hand that wields them is almighty. And then, when it is thus with us, prayer is slackened, and the hands hang down,

and the nerves of all strenuous exertions are cut, and hoping little, we are preparing ourselves to receive little from the LORD. And, moreover, ever with this doubting heart goes the niggard hand. What is done is done deceitfully, done without heart or hope; that which has cost nothing is offered, and even that grudgingly, "the lame and the blind." It is thought a vain thing that England should send forth any of her nobler or more hopeful sons to the work. The Whyteheads, the Henry Martyns, that have died upon the field of battle, are counted to have thrown away their lives. Vague reports of the ill-success of Missions are anxiously listened for, and eagerly snatched at, as excuses for still further holding back; surer notices of the Spirit poured out, and of some great blessing vouchsafed upon the work, are looked at coldly and with suspicion.

Let us see, brethren, that for ourselves we put not any of these lets and hindrances in the way of our God. I have been led in what has been here spoken, to consider more the external activity of the Church than its work at home, more therefore, it might seem, one of these great Societies than the other, yet in truth there is no separating of their offices, the one is the pioneer of the other, and the Church's activity at home and abroad are but different aspects of one, and the same spiritual life which is working and stirring within her.

Be it yours, brethren, to answer worthily the appeal which is made to you on behalf of both. Nor should I omit to remind you, that one of them, which some years ago had large funds in hand, determined a little while ago that while the needs of the heathen world were so great, the cries for help so urgent, the souls perishing so many, it would have gold and silver in store no longer; but rather would reach out in aid of these crying needs

to the utmost of its strength, yea, and far beyond its strength, trusting to the large bounty of English churchmen that in this it should not be ashamed. The determination was a noble one, it was a deed done in faith. Be ours now and always to justify the confidence which was thus reposed in us; and by a free offering of our carnal things, to show ourselves thankful to that LORD who has so largely and in such great love sown unto us spiritual things.

THE RELATIVE DUTIES OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

BY THE

REV. JOHN FORSTER, M.A.,

HER MAJESTY'S CHAPLAIN OF THE SAVOY.

ST. LUKE II. 51.

And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.

THERE is but little recorded in the Gospels of our blessed Lord's early life. Such information was no doubt withheld because it was not really expedient for us; and although it might gratify a natural curiosity, it might tend to divert our minds from the more important period of the Saviour's ministry. But among the few incidents of that class which are recorded is the one in the text, that He was *obedient to His parents*. At the commencement as at the close of His life, when he provided for His surviving parent from the cross, He proved that He partook of the sympathies and all the better affections of man's nature: and those who neglect the relative duties of private life are here forcibly taught that there is something wrong when they make public duties, of whatever kind, an excuse for neglecting those which they solemnly owe to the private ties of kindred.

The subject of the text has a peculiar interest at this happy season, when it is customary with parents to call all their children around them, and to watch their progress in wisdom as in stature. To the young we cannot help looking forward with deep interest; they are coming forward *as supporters* of the Church of CHRIST.

For occasional exhortations to them we have the authority of St. Peter and St. John, who address themselves particularly to young persons in their Epistles; and St. Paul, writing to Titus, bids him "exhort the young to be sober-minded*." The Chief-shepherd, too, with an anxiety for that part of the flock which more especially needed tender care, has left to every pastor this brief but emphatic instruction, "Feed My lambs."

Yet *no* member of a congregation is excluded from reflections of this sort, which may be profitably listened to by those of riper age, even though they be not parents. Such thoughts may serve to remind all of the sins of *their* youth, and, if unrepented of, it is of as much consequence to be *put in mind* of them, as it is to the young to be seasonably *warned* against those sins into which they are likely to fall. For let sins have been committed ever so many years ago, yet, like debts once contracted, they are still *standing* against us. However long forgotten by us, they are registered *before God*, and no interval of time can take away from their guilt. Have we not all, then, reason to exclaim with David, "Remember not, O LORD, the sins of my youth!"

A glance at the Decalogue will shew us the importance of the subject before us. It is remarkable, that immediately after those commandments which teach us our duty towards God, succeeds that of "Giving honour to parents." This is the declared *foundation* of all the various duties between man and man, as summed up in the Second Table. And well is it so placed; for, assuredly, it is that fruitful germ from which every other social duty may be expected to spring, as it is the surest preservative against the violation of them. It was, as we may remember, the flagrant breach of *this* particular

* Titus ii. 9.

commandment which called forth our Lord's holy indignation, and one of His most emphatic rebukes of the corrupt Pharisees. Although honouring of parents (which in terms implied maintenance as well as every other filial duty,) was so eminently enjoined in the Moral Law, they had taught the people that the enriching of the Priestly Treasury was a duty of *more* solemn obligation than for the child to support a sick or an aged parent!

We see the fruits of parental discipline and filial obedience in the blessing which the Church at this season commemorates, and the fruits of which *we* are so pre-eminently enjoying,—the manifestation of our Lord JESUS CHRIST and His Gospel to the world. For turn to the history of that good old Patriarch, who is the father of “all the faithful,” and there see WHY the LORD made choice of Abraham, to make Himself known to him in a particular manner, to distinguish him from all the rest of the world. We need not stop to examine and reply to all the reasons which are or may be assigned for this particular regard shown to Abraham and his posterity; *but* since the Almighty Himself has been pleased to GIVE a *reason* for such regard, it highly concerns us to know *what* that particular reason is: it teaches us how *we* may draw down the blessing of GOD on ourselves and on our posterity. The reason assigned in Scripture is this:—“For I know him, that he will *command his children* and his household after him, and *they* shall keep the way of the LORD*.” GOD saw that Abraham would so rule and govern his children as to make them copy his own good example; and *therefore* it was that He showed him such distinguishing mercy, and determined to raise him into “a great and mighty

* Gen. xviii. 19.

nation," a nation through which "in the fulness of time" the whole earth should be blessed.

What a blessing was this, from the earliest times, upon a wise *parent*! And hear from the *Prophets* a blessing upon obedient children in the case of the Rechabites: "Because ye *have obeyed* the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he hath commanded you, therefore thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever."

The same encouragements we find, as we should expect, under the New Covenant, which so invariably confirms the Old. "Children," (writes St. Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians,) "obey your parents in all things, for *this* is well pleasing unto the LORD."

Very needful it was to have a Divine authority for this rule of filial obedience, for assuredly it is not agreeable to our nature. Young persons, especially, are remarkable for a strong disposition to have their *own* way, to enjoy themselves, and take their pleasure. They have *as* strong an indisposition to listen to advice, and to be guided by the experience of others.

They enter the world with little knowledge and less experience; with lively spirits and warm passions to mislead them; they are bent on pleasing and gratifying themselves: while, presumptuous and self-confident, they shut both their ears and eyes against admonition and example.

The natural consequences of these things are obvious to all but themselves. Is a young man, for instance, idle and dissipated, devoted to frivolous pursuits? how certainly does he suffer for his folly and misconduct, perhaps for all the remaining days of his life. He arrives at no ~~—~~ *eminence*, he obtains no respect; he has laid no founda-

tion for useful, rational, honourable occupations, he has provided no resources for the time when his trifling enjoyments can please no longer; but a listless, discreditable, miserable old age awaits him! Or, is a young man intemperate and licentious in the days of his youth? what does *this* conduct naturally entail, but a debilitated body and an enfeebled mind? See him an old man in what ought to have been the prime of his days!

Do we need any further proofs of the natural consequence of youthful sins? go to the criminal who has forfeited his life to the laws of his country: hear his dying confessions. To *what* cause does he ascribe his dreadful end, but to the sins and wickednesses of his youth? "Take warning, (he cries) by my example; when young I forgot GOD; I disobeyed my parents; and now I am righteously visited for my offences; I am left to go the way which I had chosen, to reap the evil which I have sown."

Thus does GOD, in the course of His providence, frequently show that He does *not* overlook the sins committed in youth. And if He so judges in this life, can it be presumed for a moment that He will not strictly judge them hereafter? We know from His own Word that such *will be* the fate of the youthful *presumptuous* sinner. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth," is the warning of the royal preacher; "let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but *know thou*, that for all these things GOD will bring thee into judgment*."

We can scarcely over-estimate the value of filial obedience when inculcated upon Christian principles.

* Eccles. xi. 9.

Were it universally prevalent, the national virtue and the public safety could never be seriously endangered—for a nation is but a community composed mainly of families. Then might civil government be conducted on the higher principle of love and duty, rather than (as it chiefly is) by the influence of fear and selfish interests. Who is there so likely to show obedience to human laws,—to live contented, or even attain to honour under them,—as the man who has respected the Divine laws? We are all said to be born in ignorance and sin; we are prone to receive first impressions from what we see and hear, and we must be *formed* into what we are to be. If these things are so,—as our Bibles tell us, and the experience of every man must confirm,—then must the science of life be taught at its earlier stage,—before evil habits are added to original corruption, and while the seed lies yet somewhat loose upon the surface. If some principles will inevitably be imbibed, how important is it that a child should learn the best. To make him a happy and useful member of society, let him be taught to feel his responsibility as an accountable creature; let the authority of others be respected, and let him submit his own feelings to moral discipline and habitual restraint.

Remember, children, to reverence as well as love your parents, as they are *the representatives of God*. And let not respect for such as are more advanced in years than yourselves stop there. You have read how, even in a heathen state, (the famous republic of Sparta,) one of the first things taught to, and strictly required of, the young was *respect for age*. And shall not Christians do more? The natural temper of that extreme of life is, indeed, very different from yours; but Providence has mixed them both together in society

for mutual benefit. Whatever infirmities you may fancy you see in them, bear with cheerfully; endeavour to be agreeable to them, as they for the most part do to be useful to you, and then all will be well. They may be able to make you large amends, often in your worldly interests, but at least in such information and good advice as will do you far higher service than all your cheerfulness and attention can afford them delight. Probably it is not long they may continue with you. Profit then by them as long as you can, before you are left quite to yourselves.

By observing such a demeanour to all above you, you will gradually acquire that modesty and humility which in young people is so exceedingly graceful. It is one of St. Paul's general directions to the young, "not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think." Most people, indeed, should have more diffidence than they have, but the young much more than others. It is not natural, it is not possible that in the very entrance of life, one who has taken no pains to know anything, should be remarkable for wisdom: and therefore when we see (as we sometimes do) young persons perfectly contented with themselves, positive that their own way of thinking and acting (whatever it may chance to be) is right; when they venture in questions of the greatest moment (even in matters that concern Religion) to decide, without the least hesitation beforehand, or the least doubt afterwards,—perhaps contrary to what the ablest persons in all ages have thought,—surely this is a surprising want of modesty. It is such a habit that at last destroys in the young all reverence for truth, all virtuous government of their faculties and lives, leading them often to early misery here, and hardening them against that penitent conviction, which alone can prevent

misery hereafter. "Woe unto them," says the Prophet, "who call evil good, and good evil: woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight*."

But the chief advice we could give the young may be summed up in the words of Solomon: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." You are to look up, *through* your earthly parents, to a Heavenly Father, whom you are to love more than even father or mother, brother or sister; for where can you find such a Father here? who can love you with a love so pure? who can provide for you as He will provide for you? You must one day lose your earthly parents, but if you take the *Almighty* for your Father, He will be your Father for ever: He will *never* leave you nor forsake you. Even when He *chastens* you it is in *love* to you. "We have had fathers of our flesh," argues the Apostle, "which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness†." Commit yourselves then to *His* care and keeping. Choose Him for the guide of your youth, and He will be your protector in your riper years, your consolation in old age, your refuge in death, and your portion for ever! Be found, with the youthful and heavenly-minded JESUS, about *that* "Father's business;" and so will you too increase in wisdom as in stature, in favour both with God and man.

And now a word or two to parents. You who bear that tender title owe an important duty to GOD, to your

* Isaiah v. 20, 21.

† Heb. xii. 9, 10

country, and to your children. First, to *God*; for they owe obedience to Him in the first place; and it is but His authority which you exercise over them. They are *His* creatures whom you call your children. Be as tender as you will, but with tenderness mix correction. If they perish for want of it, or for lack of timely instruction, remember that He will *require* their souls at your hands!

You have likewise a trust reposed in you by your country. One calm sentence of Holy Writ, respecting the reciprocal duties of parents and children, is better than all the systems put together,—is worth whole volumes of those principles (some of them positively dangerous) which now deluge the press. There is nothing of greater consequence to the public than that the youth of the nation should be well trained up; that the seeds of sound religious principles should be sown betimes in their hearts. These are the only methods from which we can have any hopes to see our country supplied with honest and worthy men. For, consider: the power of the magistrate, necessary and valuable as it is, operates upon society only at a distance, and only on their outward actions. Even the public precepts and exhortations of the parochial *Minister* must be general; while his private teaching can reach particular persons only, at certain times, and then, too, under the disadvantage of an imperfect knowledge as to their tempers and wants. But parents, living in the same house, and always or often among their children, cannot but know what instructions their ignorance,—what restraints their vices,—and what management their dispositions, require.

But there is another consideration yet, which cannot fail (one would think) to touch *every* parent's heart: I mean the benefit *to the child itself*. Natural affection

calls them, by its strongest ties, to guard their offspring against the certain miseries of this life and the next, by making them Christians.

Alas! how little else, after all, earthly parents can do! We see our children springing up around us: we watch their growth and buoyant life with feelings of gratified pride; and yet, for aught we can do, to-morrow the darling child may be a corpse! You can do nothing at the last fatal hour,—and what can you do at the still more dreadful day of Judgment which is to follow,—for your child? Can you break through the barrier of that awful tribunal, and arrest the sentence of the Judge? No! you must stand to be judged yourself!

But there *is* one thing you *can* do! You can discipline your child for eternity. Oh! how painful here, as well as hereafter, is the situation of that unhappy parent who has neglected the religious culture of a child. In such a family you will find nothing but contentions, and confusion, and misery. The parent's mouth is filled with bitter complaints of the undutifulness of the child; but it is the parent who has sinned the most, and who often lives to see its offspring become the victim of vice and evil company, until irrecoverably lured to the pit of infamy and destruction. This is, indeed, to sow thorns for the dying pillow!

On the other hand, it would be difficult to describe, —it would be difficult so much as to conceive, the joy of *that* parent who shall meet its offspring in another world around the everlasting throne, and be able to say, "Behold here am I, and the children Thou hast given me!"

May we all,—parents and children,—Minister and people,—meet at last, as sons and daughters, in the house of our Common Father,—one united happy family!

THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST.

BY

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HARLESTON.

ISAIAH XI. 2.

And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and might; the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord.

THE prophet is inspired, in this chapter, with a revelation of the glories of the MESSIAH's kingdom. To fill up the picture, resplendent with spiritual blessings, we have exhibited to us the restoration of a converted remnant of the Jewish people to their own land, and the establishment of peace and unity among the several portions of creation, effected by the subjection of the Prince of Evil and Strife, to the power of MESSIAH the Prince of Peace. But before the accomplishment of this vision, which we are constrained, by the evidence of facts, to regard as still future, He, who shall then be exalted in glory, was to be manifested a Saviour of perishing sinners, a compassionate friend of the afflicted, and a preacher of righteousness. To this first appearance, when the tree, destined to overtop all the trees of the forest, should, in lowly condition, appear like a root out of a dry ground—a mere rod out of the stem of Jesse—the description contained in the five opening verses of the chapter principally applies, for it contemplates JESUS

in his earthly character of Redeemer and Mediator. An account of the kingdom of God established upon earth, was fitly preceded by an exhibition of the character of Him who should bring it in, and who should be, at the same time, the chief glory of it.

Accustomed as we are, from other parts of Scripture, to look upon JESUS as one with the Father, very and eternal GOD, we may, perhaps, find some difficulty in rightly understanding the terms in which He is here spoken of. The prophet ascribes the wisdom, and might, and execution of judgment, appertaining to the MESSIAH, to the resting of the Spirit upon Him, as though these powers did not belong to Him in his own right, but were imparted by a higher and independent authority. Other passages, calculated to convey the same impression, might be adduced, but we will refer to one only, where our Lord himself says, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me; and this is the Father's will that hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." For the reconciliation of this seeming discrepancy, and the removal of the doubts respecting the perfection of our blessed Lord's divine nature, which might be awakened in some minds, by these and similar passages, let it be remembered that He is exhibited to our view, in holy Scripture, *in two distinct lights*; 1st,—as the *only begotten, eternal Son of GOD*, inferior to the Father, only as deriving from Him (the fountain) the infinite essence of Deity, which, by a generation incomprehensible to us, He received before all time in unlimited fulness and perfection, so as to be of one substance and eternity with the Father; and 2nd,—as *the incarnate Saviour*, who became the Son of man, by taking our nature in the womb of the blessed

Virgin. This act of condescension is spoken of by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Philippians, "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." To these two characters, viz., "Son of God," and "Son of man," the language of Scripture respectively applies. An additional distinction may be remarked under the head of his Messiahship, for, in the prosecution of that gracious office, He is occasionally spoken of as a suffering, persecuted, submissive partaker of our sorrows and sinless infirmities; and at other times, as a prince and conqueror, clothed indeed with our nature, but triumphing, in it, over the powers of darkness, and exalting it to sovereignty over every enemy. This head will not, however, generally require to be so much attended to, as the preceding ones, in reconciling the apparent opposition between the two classes of texts above mentioned. The first of these classes, regarding Jesus as the eternal Son of the Father, comprehends those passages which speak of Him as God—as one with the Father—and assign to Him the attributes of the Godhead; the other, contemplating Him as the Son of man, who dwelt in human form on earth, having become the promised seed of the woman, embraces all those declarations which represent Him as inferior to the Father, and ascribe to Him the qualities and infirmities of man. These distinct natures, which are united in the MESSIAH, constituting Him "very God, and very man," are most clearly specified in the Athanasian creed, together with their respective dignities, for our Lord is there said "to be equal to the

Father, as touching his Godhead, and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood." Some notice of this key to the right acceptation of apparently conflicting passages of Scripture seemed necessary, not from its novelty or deep research, but because no doctrine has been more assailed by the teachers of heresy than that of our Lord's divinity. So far beyond the limits of human wisdom is the mystery of Christ's incarnation, that the pride of the natural man rises in opposition to the reception of the sacred truth. No refuge for unbelief must, therefore, be left, which can be cleared away; nor any stumbling-block be permitted to impede the humble but unstable penitent's access to his heavenly Redeemer, which a due investigation of revealed wisdom can make smooth.

Maintaining the distinction here suggested, let us proceed to examine those parts of the character of JESUS CHRIST which are spoken of in the text. We are *first* directed to *his constitution to the office of Messiah, by the operation of the Spirit*. Since He subjected Himself to death, for the redemption of the condemned world, and since He partook of our infirmities, "that He might be a merciful high priest in things pertaining to God," and assure us, "having Himself been tempted, of his ability and readiness to succour them that are tempted," "it was necessary that He should be made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted;"—in whose person human nature was to be perfectly and inseparably united with the holy and infinite Godhead. Too high for our comprehension is this mystery of godliness, nor is it wise to intrude within the precincts of the hidden things of eternity. We are not at liberty to exercise presumptuous speculations upon *the method* by which this gracious but wonderful union was effected; let us rather with humble

thankfulness adore the wisdom which, by its own ways, removed every impediment to the recovery of lost man. Thus much, however, is revealed for our instruction, that it was through the presence and energy of the HOLY SPIRIT, that the ministry of JESUS was commenced and prosecuted. He was conceived by the HOLY GHOST, and born of the Virgin Mary, thus uniting in one CHRIST the divine and human natures. At his baptism, the HOLY GHOST descended from heaven, and lighted upon Him; in the Acts of the Apostles, Peter declares, "how GOD anointed JESUS of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power;" and in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "JESUS is said to have offered Himself, through the eternal Spirit, without spot to GOD." These testimonies refer the power and wisdom of JESUS, in his earthly humiliation, to the presence of the Spirit with Him; and we must readily perceive how they harmonize with the text which speaks of the Spirit of the LORD resting upon the MESSIAH, figured under the expressions, "a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch out of his root."

We pass, in the next place, to the *characteristics* of this spirit which should manifest themselves in the person of the MESSIAH. There are *three* mentioned, the *first* of which is *a spirit of wisdom and understanding*. The faculties of man are not only limited in extent, but obscured by prejudice, and earthly corruptions. So far from being able to instruct his fellows without danger of error, he cannot direct his own steps aright. But no such imperfection resided in the blessed JESUS. One part of his gracious mission being to restore right knowledge to man, the divine wisdom, which belonged to Him of right as GOD, dwelt in Him by the Spirit, in his character of MESSIAH,—“GOD manifest in the flesh.” To Him were open the secrets of eternity, “for by Him

were created all things in heaven, in earth, and under the earth." No darkness could veil from his searching gaze, nor could the subtle hypocrisy of the false professor deceive him; "He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man;" for He knew what was in man. The delusion,—which blinds men to the consequences of their actions, or to the real quality and tendency of circumstances around, and which, through the influence of inclination, makes "them call good evil and evil good,"—had no power to mislead Him. He beheld all things in their true light, and stript of every deception of false colouring; so that most truly is it written; "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

His wisdom was shown also in *revealing the secrets of futurity*; foretelling both the coming judgment on Jerusalem, and the more awful dissolution of the world. As by Him its foundations were at first laid, so He spake of its last declining years, "when its elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." To its inhabitants He proclaimed the certainty of a judgment to come, when all must stand before the tribunal of eternal justice, and be for ever admitted to endless, unspeakable bliss; or consigned to hopeless, unremitted torment. So manifest in Him was the spirit of wisdom and understanding, that even they who were too hardened through prejudice and sinful affections to receive Him for their Master and Saviour, were constrained to confess, "Never man spake like this man."

The second exercise of the Spirit's dwelling in Jesus was to *endow Him with counsel and might*. Respecting the former of these expressions, some doubt may be entertained of its precise signification; since it may

mean either the ability *to impart counsel or advice to others*, or the *possession of clear and decided judgment in counter-acting* the designs of his own enemies. Most signally, however, did He possess both; for when do we read of any humble, sincere inquirer being sent away unsatisfied; or what peril overhung his people, for which He did not provide them with instructions for escape? At the close of his ministry He promised his own spirit of counsel, to qualify his apostles for the arduous office to which He had appointed them; "But the Comforter, which is the HOLY GHOST, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you;" and again, "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak: for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." But from the addition of *might* to *counsel*, we are rather led to understand the expression as denoting our Lord's wisdom in *defeating the devices of enemies, and in upholding his own authority*. The whole of his sojourn on earth, after the commencement of his public ministry, testified to the unlimited sway He exercised over every opponent. The schemes of the Pharisees He exposed, the violence of contemptuous hatred He restrained, and the power of the devil He set at nought, by resisting his temptations, and dispossessing the victims of his malice. No hand could direct an effectual blow against his sacred person; nor could worldly cunning, sharpened and stimulated by hatred, succeed in entrapping Him, till the hour arrived when it was necessary that He should yield Himself to the power of his persecutors.

Hence we see that it was not they who then vanquished Him; but He, who voluntarily submitted to their

will. He had undertaken a work of mercy; and He performed it to the end. When He was comparing himself to a shepherd, who might prove the greatness of his love for his sheep by dying for them, He added, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again." "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself, I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

The counsel and might by which the Lord confounded his adversaries did not, however, (as the above promises signified), belong *only* to the period of his earthly career; for they have since been fulfilled in protecting **his** Church. He forewarned his disciples, "**In the world ye shall have tribulation; but,**" He added, "**be of good cheer, I have overcome the world;**" and at another time gave them the assurance already quoted, "of a mouth and wisdom, which all their adversaries should be unable to gainsay or resist." How amply this assertion of supreme wisdom and dominion has been verified, the history of the Church in the apostolic age, and under unceasing dangers and persecutions in subsequent ages, down to the present time, abundantly testifies.

"The *spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord*," is thirdly ascribed to the MESSIAH. Since this was closely connected with the chief object of his appearance on earth, it is dwelt on more at length in the next verse, where its effect is stated, "to make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD." The state of heathen] countries, and the readiness of men, even beneath the guidance of the Gospel, to pervert the truth; may shew us how ignorant the human heart is of the nature and character of God. Having lost his image, it is prone to hide itself from his face behind any delusion. In this, as in other respects, the heavenly

Redeemer differed from those whose form and nature He took to Himself. Proceeding from the bosom of his Father, and accompanied by the co-existing and co-eternal Spirit, He spake "that which He knew and testified that which He had seen." He knew the holiness, the power, and the unchangeableness of the Father, and had his will and counsels ever present to his remembrance as the rule of all his proceedings. This knowledge is spoken of in the most unlimited terms, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do, for whatsoever things He doeth, these doeth the Father also." JESUS answered, "If I honour myself, my honour is nothing, it is my Father that honoureth me, of whom ye say He is your GOD. Yet ye have not known Him, but I know Him, and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be a liar, like unto you, but I know Him, and keep his saying." "The fear of the LORD" equally manifested itself in *the life* of JESUS of Nazareth; so that He presents Himself not less as our example than our Redeemer. "He came, not to do his own will, but the will of Him that sent Him; it was his meat to do that will;" and with scrupulous exactness He conformed to the minutest requirements of the ceremonial law, because the wisdom from above had seen good to appoint it, and He rejoiced "thus to fulfil all righteousness."

In reflecting, with *a view to personal edification*, upon the prophecy we have been considering; two points offer themselves prominently to our notice. The first is, *the claim advanced upon our adoration of Him, in whom such excellent greatness resided*; and upon our zealous imitation and diligent observance of his ways, who both taught, and set an example of the knowledge and fear of the LORD. We have a powerful confirmation, if any were needed, of

the words of JESUS, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him."

The second important lesson taught us, is "*our need of the Holy Spirit to lead us into the paths of eternal life.*" If it was by the Spirit continually present, our great High Priest and Redeemer was filled with all holiness, and wisdom, and might; how helpless must be our lot without the assistance of that heavenly deliverer! The Spirit of wisdom, of might, and of godliness, we are told, rested on JESUS, when He, for a time, laid aside his glory, and submitted to weakness and human woe. Let us see, in this intimation of the infirmity of Adam's race, the necessity we are under of casting ourselves on divine grace, in order that we may be rescued from the bondage of corruption. Repeated testimonies are scattered through the Scriptures to this effect, "that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." "Unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God; that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." "Now if any man have not the Spirit of CHRIST he is none of his." The Apostle also places the principle of the natural heart in direct opposition to that of the Holy Spirit, "Now, I say, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary one to the other." These declarations

shew the *means*, by which we may follow the steps of our Lord's most holy life. It is not enough to lay aside some sins, as increasing age, or altered circumstances lessen the temptation to continue in them; it is not enough to change our habits of life, in compliance with the example of persons amongst whom we may be newly thrown, when probably the selfish pride of the heart is as effectually ministered to as ever; there may be in all this, no advance in the knowledge and fear of GOD. If we would be numbered with those who, from every nation and every tongue, shall hail with joy the return of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, we must meditate upon his example and precepts, that we may be conformed to his image, in holiness; and seek that conformity, both by careful rejection of every inconsistent habit, and by dependance on the same Spirit, who rested on Him, to renew our souls to pure and heavenly affections. In like manner, as the branches partake of the life of the tree from which they spring, so must CHRIST's people derive their life and strength from union with him. His Spirit must be the source and principle of their spiritual existence, the medium of their engrafting into the graces and blessings of their LORD. He must dwell in them as a new and holy governor, constituting them temples of the Most High; and training them for final participation in the glories of the MESSIAH's kingdom.

CHRIST OUR DELIVERER FROM THE FEAR OF DEATH.

BY THE

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ARCHDEACON OF SALOP.

HEBREWS II. 14, 15.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

THE apostle had spoken of the infinite kindness and love of our Saviour JESUS CHRIST, in taking upon Him the nature of man, and admitting us thereby into brotherhood with Himself. Thus, he says, "Both He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren; saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren: and again, Behold I and the children which GOD hath given me." (ii. 11, 12, 13.) In these passages he shews that JESUS CHRIST acknowledges those who believe in Him, not as his brethren only, but as his children. And then come the words of the text—"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

In these words you may observe that we have three several subjects of consideration brought before us. 1st,

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The fact that **JESUS CHRIST** took our human nature upon Him; "He took part of flesh and blood." 2nd. The intention with which He did this; "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;" and, 3rd. The benefit which He has thereby obtained for us: "He hath delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

1. He took our human nature upon Him. The apostle says, "He took part of flesh and blood;" for such was the nature of the children whom He came to save. This is the wonderful fact revealed to us in the Gospel, which the apostle elsewhere calls "the great mystery of godliness," that the Son of God, who was from all eternity with the Father, and of the same nature and essence with Him, made Himself also of the same nature with man. He became incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary, through the **HOLY GHOST**. He was born into the world; He passed through the stages of infancy and childhood, and grew up to man's estate; and though free from all that is sinful in human nature, yet subject to all the infirmities of it that are without sin, as hunger and thirst, weariness and painfulness, sickness and sorrow. The disciples who have told us this had full opportunities of knowing the truth of what they said; for they had the evidence of their senses;—"their ears heard Him—their eyes looked on Him—their hands did handle Him." (1 John ii.) They saw Him in his agony in the garden, when, through his inward conflict, "his sweat like drops of blood fell to the ground;" they saw Him when his hands and feet were pierced; they saw his blood flowing so freely on the cross; and after his resurrection, when He appeared to the disciples, and they were "terrified, supposing that they had seen a spirit," He took pains to convince them to the contrary. "Behold my hands and

my feet, that it is I myself, handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." (Luke xxiv.) Upon this point, then, I need not any longer dwell: "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same."

2. We will consider the intention with which He took part of flesh and blood. It was, "that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." The devil had the power of death. The meaning of this is, that the devil is the author of death, and the cause of it. Doubtless it is God who inflicts it, as the just sentence on us sinners: but through envy of the devil sin came into the world; and that made it necessary that we should be sentenced to death; so that, as sin is the devil's work, therefore, in fact, death is also; because it is laid upon men by his means, and would not have been at all, if he had not tempted man to disobedience. Satan is the angel of death; death is his prison-house, he having permission, through the counsels of God's all-wise Providence, to subject us to it. And there was a time, before CHRIST came, that he was allowed to reign over it absolute, having as it were the keys of the door, so that he could bring all into it, and could prevent any escaping from it. But CHRIST came that He might set open those prison doors; and He hath done so through his own death: that was a necessary means to bring about that great end; for the children could not be delivered but by one who partook of the same nature with the children becoming the deliverer. Thus, when He came into the world, "He took not on Him the nature of angels," but He took on Him flesh and blood; and He did so for this very purpose, "that He might taste death for every man;" for it was only as man that He

was capable of dying; and by dying on the cross, and going into the regions of the dead, He entered into the strong man's house, and overcame him, and spoiled his goods. And CHRIST's death had this great virtue,—it was an atonement for the sins of men, an all-sufficient sacrifice of expiation, by means of which God is perfectly reconciled to all them who truly repent and believe the Gospel; and when He rose again to life on the third day, bursting open the doors of the grave, He shewed plainly both that his sacrifice was accepted, and that He was the conqueror over all the powers of darkness; so that in reality, in CHRIST's death, death received its death-blow; and in CHRIST's resurrection, he that had the power of death, that is, the devil, was destroyed, so far as his dominion over "the children" is concerned.

Thus in Coloss. ii. 15, the Apostle, referring to CHRIST's death, which was followed by such glorious effects, says, "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them *in it*," that is, in his cross. And He appeared to St. John, (as he tells us in Rev. i. 18,) saying, "I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and I have the keys of hell and of death."

This is sufficient to say respecting the second part of our subject, namely, that Christ took upon Him our flesh that "through death He might destroy him that had the power of death."

3. We have now then to contemplate the benefit which He has purchased for us thereby. "He hath delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Certainly, my brethren, the bravest of us all must admit that the thoughts of that event which is to terminate our earthly existence has

naturally the effect to keep us in a state of "bondage." We feel as prisoners shut up under sentence, having no escape. Even when we think of it at a distance, it appears a sad prospect; it unnerves us; it much depresses and dispirits us; how much more when we see it nearly approaching! It is the property of our nature to shrink from all that is painful and hurtful to us, therefore from this event above all which shatters us to pieces. For in the beautiful words of the inspired writer, it causes "the silver cord to be loosed, the golden bowl to be broken, the pitcher to be broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern; it bids the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit to return unto God who gave it." (Eccles. xii.) And it is not only on account of the pains of death that it alarms us so greatly; for often they are not very severe, or very lasting; and in the course of our lives, by passing through sicknesses and other trials, many persons become inured to pain, and learn to endure it with great fortitude. Nor is it only because it separates us from all earthly connexions, from all the things and persons that we have most delighted in in this world; though that is a severe trial. Nor is it only because it ushers us into an unknown world, where all will be new, and strange, and surprising to us; though this is an awful consideration to dwell upon. But it is rather because we cannot but think upon death as preparatory to judgment; we know that it will bring us before the tribunal of God, who will reward every man according to his works, and will cast all them with whom He is displeased into the lake of fire; and we are conscious to ourselves that we are sinners, and have done innumerable things to displease God, and to bring ourselves under his most just sentence. This it is which makes death so formidable to us,—the thought

of that which is to come after death, and which our own consciences tell us that we have deserved.

This then may well be called a "bondage," which we are all subject to, in our natural state, namely, the fear of death; and from this fear, this bondage, CHRIST came to set us free. And He hath done so for all the children, that is, for all them who truly belong to Him; viz., by his own voluntary death. For his death was, as I said, a sacrifice of atonement, which takes away the guilt of our sins, and, being followed by his resurrection, was a proof that His sacrifice was accepted, and also a proof that He had fought with, and had overcome, that last and most formidable enemy of mankind, death, and "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Therefore now, in respect to all who are CHRIST's, the sting of death is taken away, namely, that which made it so terrible, which is sin; and sin being taken away, and not imputed, death is taken away; for it no longer is the entrance into a worse state than the present, but into one that is far better, to all you who are the children, a rest from all your labours, a deliverance from all your fears, the end of all your sins, the cure of all your sorrows, the entrance into life, the gate of immortality. To all those who are CHRIST's, "to die is gain;" and though it is good for them to be here, because "to live is CHRIST," yet it is far happier for them to be removed into that place where CHRIST dwelleth, and where "they will shine as the stars for ever and ever." Thus in JESUS CHRIST's victory over the powers of darkness is brought to pass what is said in Isaiah xxv. 7: "The LORD will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the LORD GOD will wipe away

all tears from off all faces ; and the rebuke of his people shall He take away from off all the earth."

This, then, is the benefit which CHRIST has purchased for us. This is our hope in CHRIST. This is it which made the Apostles so joyful when their Lord was taken away from them, and "a cloud received Him out of their sight." For they saw Him go up as a great conqueror, who had triumphed over Satan, who had opened the prison-house of the grave, who had led captivity captive, and was gone to "receive gifts for men:" and in his victories they saw an assurance of their own; in his rising up from the grave, and ascending to the right hand of God, they saw a pledge that they also should rise, and that they also should ascend. And so it has been ever since. The victory which JESUS CHRIST has won in his nature as man, and the ground of hope which all they who are CHRIST's derive through Him,—this is the anchor of the soul which has sustained believers in every age; this has enabled them to bear the sharpest conflicts: this has been their shelter from every storm, and has made them "more than conquerors, through Him that loved them." And if there be any cure for the fear of death, any refuge for us against that dreaded enemy, any support which will not fail us at that awful hour which will cut us asunder from all that this earth contains, it is derived to us wholly from our Lord JESUS CHRIST, from his death, his resurrection, and ascension.

Therefore, do not fear, you that believe in Him and obey Him; for you are "the children" for whom He died. It is appointed unto you once to die; that sentence must be undergone by every child of man; but it is not a mark of God's displeasure against *you*, but of his displeasure against *sin*. With respect to you, CHRIST has taken away the bitterness of that cup, and has turned it even

into sweetness : for He has made death to be all gain to you,—an admission into happiness unspeakable, and to glory eternal. If you could feel assured that death should be your passage into life,—that after having passed through that avenue, you would arrive at the kingdom, and be partakers of its blessedness and glories,—if you could be certified of this, then you would be delivered from all fear and from all care. None of the evils of this world would much disturb you ; you would smile at sickness and sorrow ; and in the darkest seasons of adversity, knowing the rich reversion that awaited you at the end of your course, you would go on your way rejoicing. You cannot have this assurance: it is not permitted you to have this certainty,—it would not be good for you to feel so secure of the heavenly inheritance. It is sufficient for you that God has given this blessed hope, through our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, to all those who will become his children, and serve Him with a filial spirit. Take care then, that you lose not the mark of his children ; that you dim not the brightness of this hope ; and diminish not your own trust and reliance towards God. And you know well that every sin that you commit, that dims the light ; every duty you neglect, that clouds your prospect ; every time you stay away from this holy place, every time you turn from that holy table, every evil word you speak, every evil passion you encourage, every evil thought you give way to, that takes away the testimony of your conscience ; that makes you doubt whether you are a child of God ; that causes the darkness to come again upon your soul ; that brings back the fear of death, and renews your state of bondage. They who are living in sin, and in the neglect of duties, without restraint, may possibly be without any fear, because they may be without any thought ; but when they do reflect, then the

fear of death will naturally and most justly terrify them. And so it will all of us, in proportion as we suffer sin to revive in us ; for in that way Satan regains his opportunity to accuse us, and recovers his advantage over us.

We should be made quite free from fear, if we were made quite free from sin ; therefore, the more we are made free from sin, the more free we are from fear, for it is only when the yoke of sin is broken off, that the condemnation of it is taken away. And, as in ascending a high hill, every step you take encourages you to proceed, for you obtain a wider and a clearer prospect of the bright fields that are around you,—so it is in ascending the holy hill of Sion. Every progress you make in virtue and goodness, every step in the way of duty, every act of self-denial, every resistance to temptation, every conquest over sin, every improvement in holy dispositions, every true and heartfelt prayer,—gives you a brighter prospect of your final destination. It strengthens your faith, it enlivens your hope, it animates your endeavours, it sets you more at liberty from fear. And if you continue still growing in grace and goodness, not falling back to your former sins, but casting them, as it were, behind your back ; and by watchfulness and prayer “ pressing towards the mark for the prize of your high calling in CHRIST JESUS,” then that last enemy, death, the thoughts of which is so justly terrible to all guilty souls, will in your case be changed into a friend ; for he will admit you into the presence of God himself, and of that great Redeemer who died for you and rose again, “ whom having not seen you love,—in whom though now you see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” (1 Peter i. 8.) .

GOD IS A SPIRIT.

BY THE

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ST. JOHN IV. 24.

*God is a spirit; and they that worship Him must worship
Him in spirit and in truth.*

FEW passages can be found in the Holy Scriptures, which point out so forcibly and so clearly the awful responsibility of man as that which has just been read. By it we see the peril we stand in, each hour of our lives; and from it we hear the condemnation it passes upon almost every thought our mind suggests, and upon almost every action that our hand performs. Such being the case, we cannot on this occasion do better than give it our attentive consideration: and pray that we may be assisted by that heavenly counsel, that maketh man wise unto salvation.

It may be well, in the first instance, to mention the incident which led to our Lord's explicit declaration of the spiritual nature of the worship we must pay to Almighty God. In the early part of our LORD's ministry, He found, from the hostility of the Pharisees, that it was necessary to retire into Galilee. In this journey He went through part of Samaria: "and cometh to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now, Jacob's well was there: JESUS therefore being wearied with his jour-

ney, sat thus on the well ;” while , “his disciples had gone unto the city to buy meat.” The animosity which existed between the Samaritans and the Jews is well known : seldom was an act of kindness or of mutual courtesy done by the one to the other ; but yet in cases of necessity the Jew was allowed to purchase food of the Samaritan. I mention this, since it is remarked by the Evangelist, that the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. While JESUS was waiting the return of his disciples, a woman of Samaria came to draw water out of the well. Our LORD addresses her, and by shewing her His intimate knowledge of her habits of life, convinces the woman that He is at least a prophet. She anxiously turns the conversation from herself, and asks our LORD this question, “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship?” It was true that on that mountain an altar had been erected by Jacob ; and as he was the ancestor of the Jews, and since the Samaritans claimed the same origin, the latter vindicated their worship of God, in the place, where he whom both honoured, had offered the same service. Our Lord censures this error in the most positive manner, and claims for the Jews the superiority of their ritual. “Ye worship,” He replies, “ye know not what ; we know what we worship,” *i.e.*, so long as the Law is in force, so long must every ceremony and rite be respected ; not only are the rules of the moral code to be obeyed, but also all its ritual to be enforced. God hath commanded the tribes of Israel to appear each year before Him at Jerusalem ; and your worship therefore cannot be complete, as descendants of Jacob, if you disobey this positive command. And having shown the error of the Samaritan, He thus proceeds, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall

worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him; woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the Father;" "GOD is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." It may also be remarked, in continuation, that to the woman's observation, "I know that MESSIAS cometh, which is called CHRIST: when He is come He will tell us all things;" Jesus said emphatically, "I that speak unto thee am He." Why our blessed LORD chose this woman to be the object to whom these good tidings should so explicitly be revealed, we will not now inquire, being satisfied that by it GOD's good purposes were fulfilled, and "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

And now let us consider the peculiar fitness of our Lord's answer, "GOD is a Spirit," to the question of the woman. Under the Mosaic dispensation there were frequently granted evident proofs of the immediate presence of GOD; when He led the Israelites from Egypt through the wilderness, the pillar of the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, were witnesses unto them whose people they were, and of GOD's nearness to them. And at the consecration of the temple by Solomon, "the glory of the LORD so filled the house of the LORD, that the priests could not stand to minister," proving thereby the acceptance by GOD of the house that had been built for His name. And although the second temple was deficient in many of the holy objects which the first contained, yet the memory of that which had been destroyed, the sanctity of the site, and the approval which its reconstruction had received from holy men, made the Jews reverence the place as one of peculiar sacredness—as one where GOD would more openly and directly reply unto their prayers; and thus the great, though incompre-

hensible, truth of God's omnipresence was in some measure concealed. And yet this was the truth, by trusting to which, their father Abraham exemplified his belief throughout his life. He evinced his confidence in it, since he, as the servant of an invisible, ever present, and Most High God, became a wanderer from his own country and home—everywhere a pilgrim, a sojourner only in the land of the stranger. By faith in an omnipresent but unseen God, he believed in the promise not only of that earthly Canaan which his descendants should possess; but of that fathership, that through his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed; and this faith when he as yet had no child, was accounted unto him for righteousness. The same trust in the constant watching and continual presence of a spiritual Being, supported the other patriarchs and the heroes of the Jewish Church, gave David strength to meet the gigantic champion of the Philistines with a sling and a stone, and Daniel courage in the den of lions. And the Psalmist also taught them that it was good at all times and at all places to draw near to God: for if thou seek Him with thy whole desire, He will be found of thee; and the LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. And Isaiah says, "Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." So that these inspired men certainly did not teach the exclusive nearness of Jerusalem to the LORD. Yet to the majority of their countrymen, it had the appearance of a new doctrine to assert the contrary; nor did they, any more than the Samaritan woman, fully comprehend the saying, that "God is a Spirit," by which our Lord explained his meaning, and showed to them its truth.

And are we better than they? Do not we practically disbelieve the fact of God's constant proximity unto us?

What the Scriptures reveal, and what our prayers confess, do not our actions deny? GOD has given to our minds the wonderful faculty of ranging in a moment through the whole of his creation,—what cannot the Bestower of such a gift perform? *Whither* our minds wander, can not He be present? But argument and illustration we need not, we who are born in a Christian land, baptised into CHRIST's holy Catholic Church, and instructed in GOD's Word,—we who pray to Him for help in time of need, we must be conscious that we are all and always in the presence of GOD. And although we may confess that such knowledge is too wonderful for us, and that we cannot attain unto it, yet with the Psalmist each of us may say, “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?” It is, that GOD is a Spirit, and therefore not requiring materiality, and thus place, that gives to our minds some feeble explanation of this great difficulty.

And here we are very naturally led to the deduction which our Lord JESUS Himself made, from the fact, that GOD is a Spirit, namely, “therefore they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth:” because we must think of Him as¹ ever present, seeing our actions and knowing our thoughts; as one who compasseth our path, and spieth out all our ways: and being conscious of this, for we cannot deny its truth, we see the necessity of acting, as we believe we should act, were we sensible of being in the presence of GOD. Thus therefore we must pray to Him, not only as to One that seeth that which is without, but also that which is within; we must pray in spirit,—not in lifeless form,—not in vain profession, but in very truth. We must be zealous in Christian observance,—and not only so, but in the performance of Christian duties, that the

tree may be known by its fruits; for the latter proves the sincerity and vitality of our religion: and as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. It is written, that GOD is love, and he that loveth not knoweth not GOD; and it is in the exercise of this divine attribute that the creature most resembles his Creator. This love is the foundation, and also the superstructure of the Christian scheme; it excels hope and faith, since it is the completion of the two; it is the very bond of peace and of all virtues. Were its influence universal, CHRIST's kingdom would be as universally established, and the golden age depicted by the Prophet be fully realized. The SPIRIT of GOD would find in man a fit temple to dwell in, and Adam's descendants resume the state for which he was designed, and from which he has so sadly fallen. But these visions are the future lot of the redeemed, and are in this life forbidden to our hopes, and we must look upon a scene of sterner and less promising features; and we, especially, as ministers of CHRIST, must set before the members of his Church in every possible way that we can devise, the necessity and the advantage of yielding to the influence of the Spirit,—and well knowing the terrors of the LORD,—use our utmost endeavours to persuade men: and therefore it now remains for me to make some practical applications of this momentous subject to ourselves. We must worship GOD in spirit and in truth.

Let every one of us then, each for himself, examine his own conduct, as it regards his duty unto GOD and his duty unto man. And we separate these duties, not because they can ever be opposed the one to the other; but that in the former, we may class those services which are of a more spiritual character than the

latter. Such are especially our acts of public worship and of private prayer. Could we enter God's house so carelessly as we often do,—could we so idly and negligently perform our part in the public worship of his name, if we were duly impressed with the fact that God is a Spirit,—that He is present with us, and that we are commanded to worship Him in spirit and in truth? The thought ought to recall us to our proper occupation, and the heart, chastised by regret and repentance, would be better guarded against future error. And if in his house we are forgetful of God's presence, scarcely shall we remember Him in other situations of life, when such recollections may be most needed by us: but, on the other hand, we may fairly conclude, that the attentive hearer and the zealous worshipper will, through that attention and that zeal, find help and comfort in every hour of trial and of trouble. Since at such times they will be led to ask that aid which our LORD by the HOLY SPIRIT has promised to all that rightly call upon Him: "Knock and it shall be opened unto you, ask and you shall receive," are his words to his disciples of every age.

But I have spoken of the neglect of public duties, as bringing upon the inattentive a loss; but it is more,—it is an offence, and one which shall not go unpunished. And our punishment will be greater in proportion as the advantages offered us are also greater. Hence in this country, blessed as it is with a pure and reformed branch of CHRIST's holy Catholic Church, where, when we meet together to worship God, the congregation have so large a part to perform,—this remark especially applies. You come not here as spectators of a magnificent and imposing ceremony, bewildering and astonishing the senses, but not teaching, and therefore not benefiting the heart; you admit not of a vicarious

religion,—of a priest standing between you and heaven, for you know that there is but one Mediator between God and man, the Lord JESUS CHRIST: but you join in a reasonable and intelligible service, and we all, the minister and the people, with one voice and one heart praise the LORD. What then can any of you say who omit such opportunities? Do you not, by despising the means offered, neglect, in the words of the Apostle, a great salvation? And next, and briefly, as to our duty unto man. I mean that which concerns our ordinary intercourse with our fellow creatures, either in business in the world, or in our domestic relations at home. Can any one for an instant hesitate to believe, that a full conviction of the spiritual nature of God and of his constant presence would have any but a most beneficial tendency to correct our conduct and to purify our thoughts?

Finally, whatever difficulties may occur to the mind on this subject,—and such no doubt there are; for we are thoroughly incapable of comprehending the nature of that Almighty Being, who is eternal, every where present, and who knoweth all things, your difficulties would be still greater did we not believe in these attributes; for we have evidence enough of their necessity. And these things are not contrary to, but beyond our reason; and so will remain whilst we, as in this life, see through a glass darkly. Here shadows and mists obscure our views, even of man's operations; and as we walk through this valley of death, our footsteps often stumble; and even when we raise our eyes to Him that sitteth on the Throne, although we perceive that righteousness and judgment are his habitation, yet clouds and darkness are round about Him. But the time will come when we, like the Prophet of old, who from a mountain's height surveyed the promised land,—I say we, from a higher

and holier hill, may survey, in all its breadth and all its extent, the heavenly Canaan. And each of us may become a denizen of the celestial Jerusalem, a city whose builder and maker is God. No irrevocable decree shall bar our passage of that river, whose type was Jordan. And then seeing as we are seen, we shall fully know that God is a Spirit, and thankfully acknowledge the mercy, that we have been enabled, through the merits of CHRIST's atoning sacrifice, to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

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THE BACKSLIDER.

BY

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II. PETER II. 20, 21.

For, if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

GOD has said to each of us, "My son, give me thine heart." This is the substance of the first and great commandment; and while we, through his grace assisting us, do this, all is well with us. We love Him, and therefore it is our delight to set Him always before us. We fear Him, and therefore count all the advantages or losses of this life as trifling, when compared with his displeasure. The heart which we have given to God is inhabited by his Blessed Spirit, moulding all our desires and affections according to his own most holy will. Our life, therefore, is spiritual peace and joy, and our hope—immortality. Happy—most happy would it be for us, if having attained this blessedness, we always preserved it! But alas! this is not the Christian's constant experience. We are at the best but fallen creatures, beset with enemies; and it has pleased God that our life here should be a state of

trial. Although, through the blood of CHRIST, the kingdom of heaven is now accessible to fallen man, the enjoyment of it is made, under GOD, to depend upon our own exertions. While it is true that we can do no work at all pleasing to GOD without his preventing and assisting grace, still, having this grace now given to us through CHRIST, we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, and yet with full hope, because He worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. It is the part allotted to us to labour—to strive—to wrestle—to fight, and to perfect holiness—all in the fear of GOD, and in dependence upon Him for strength. This is our state upon earth. It is manifest, therefore, that we may rise and we may fall. Moreover, to add to our difficulties, our enemies are not common enemies; we wrestle not against flesh and blood; our warfare is against spiritual wickedness in high places—against evil spirits, powerful and wise—wise to destroy. They seem to know either by experience or otherwise our several weaknesses; and they present to us those temptations which are most likely to prevail against us. Their one object is to separate us from GOD. The means, however, are various. Sometimes we are beguiled even by our duties. It is our duty to love our husbands, our wives, and our children. It is our duty to get our own living, and to provide for the wants of our families. It is the duty of some of us to employ ourselves in the cultivation of our own minds, in the pursuits of learning and science. It is the duty of all of us, according to our several conditions in life, to employ ourselves for the benefit of our neighbours. These feelings and pursuits are not only lawful, but they are obligatory. They are duties which in our various stations we are bound to fulfil. In the earnest discharge of them we are often ready to think that we are beyond the

tempter's reach; but, sad to say, he sometimes appears even as an angel of light. He tempts to the love of husband, wife, or child, till there is no space left in our hearts for the love of GOD. He takes advantage of the necessity and duty of our respective worldly employments, and induces us to make them the main objects of our attention, even to the neglect of our soul's welfare. At other times he meets us in a bolder way. He seeks to justify the indulgence of a forbidden temper, or to inflame us with a forbidden lust. And oh! that the Christian life only knew of temptation, dangers, and conflicts,—that it knew of no falls! But we are so weak and sinful, so ready to call evil good, that we too often yield to the assaults of our enemy, even when we are the least expecting it.

To show you more plainly what I mean, let us take our employments, whatever they may be, either in the busy world or in thoughtful retirement, for the study no less than the market is within the tempter's domain, and see how he makes use of them for our ruin. These employments we know are to be entered upon and pursued with zeal, and if they are performed as an act of religion, if they never interfere with the higher duty which we owe to GOD, they will, so far from being a hurt, become a blessing to us. We shall be fulfilling the will of GOD, we shall be benefiting our neighbour, we shall ourselves be placed by active employment out of the reach of many temptations which accompany idleness, and we shall at the same time be giving to GOD, our jealous GOD, that higher place in our hearts which He imperatively requires. But these employments may, and often do become, owing to our want of watchfulness, a snare,—they obtain an undue influence over us, which, if not checked, will in time cast a chill over the warmth of our

love to God, and lessen our delight in his more immediate service.

This change may be very gradual, and scarcely for a time perceptible, but on that account not the less dangerous. Having spent the day, for instance, in our worldly occupations, it may be that we have been too much engaged in the course of it to think of sending up our prayer to God to sanctify them, and to keep them from weaning our hearts from Him who is the source of our spiritual life. It may be, that we have entered upon them and pursued them in a too worldly spirit, and when the evening approaches, the sabbath hour of the day, we feel, as well from worldliness as from weariness, a distaste for those holy duties of self-examination and communion with God, which are essential to our spiritual well-being. If this continues, the effect will be perceptible,—we may go through these duties, but that which gave life to them, and caused the usefulness of the one and the sanctifying peace and comfort of the other, will not be there. Our self-examination will not be searching and humbling,—our prayer will not be childlike and earnest, neither will our Bible be devotionally and thoughtfully studied. This will at length become clear to ourselves, and make us displeased and uncomfortable, and in time something like a cloud will pass between God and our souls. Happy will it be for us, if at the time we are alarmed and endeavour a correction, since if it be pursued in humble penitence, and in honesty of heart, if it make us more watchful and more earnest in prayer, fearing a like declension again, it will, through God's mercy in CHRIST, restore to us the peace and blessedness we had lost; but if our correction be not of this character, it will be but short-lived, and soon we shall again feel a growing distaste to closet duties. Our worldly employments returning

with each returning day, and occupying our thoughts, we shall by degrees become more reconciled to, or rather, we shall not feel so sensibly, the withdrawal of the light of God's countenance: while at the same time our love of the world, and the things of the world, increasing, our growth in grace will be less heeded, our Bible will not be that book of interest which once it was, our prayers will be less sincere and earnest, and our self-examination careless and soon neglected, and we shall settle down into a lukewarmness and a gradual coldness of heart. This state, however, will not be arrived at without conflicts and resolutions of amendment, nor without trials to regain our lost position: but our heart not being singly devoted to God, but being divided among many lords, our efforts will be but partial and weak. They will not be strengthened by CHRIST's sufficient grace, and consequently will be ineffectual against our increasing worldliness, while every resolution broken, and every conflict in which we have been defeated, will end in a wider separation between God and us. We may then perhaps try to seek comfort in acts of charity, or in externals, forgetting, or rather trying to forget, that God is a spirit and demands our hearts. We may try to comfort ourselves in our moral character, and in our possessing the praise of men; but when we dare to think we shall feel no comfort. However cold and worldly we may be, we still shall feel no comfort in them while we know that in the sight of God we are as a withering branch; that there is no growth of holiness within us, no increasing love of God, or thirsting after closer communion with Him, no sign of active spiritual life. If this be our state can any situation be more painful? Day following day and every day bringing us nearer to our grave, and we unmoved, except perhaps now and then feeling startled

by the beams of heavenly light, which God's good Spirit is darting across our path in hopes of checking and reclaiming us.

This has been an example of the tempter's power through the world's influence; let us take another from the lusts of the flesh, which war more especially against the young. A more important warning cannot be given to you, my younger brethren, than this of St. Peter's, "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." Although they may appear to you now like wreaths of flowers, be assured that a time will come when you will find them, if not bitterly repented of and forsaken, (and who that is wise would prepare for himself bitter days!) burning chains that will drag you down to hell. O that you were wise, that you understood this!

The prayer of David, a prayer taught him by bitter experience, was, that God would "turn away his eyes from beholding vanity," and the exhortation of Solomon is, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." If we, brethren, in dependence upon God's grace, keep watch over our eyes and hearts, no lust of the flesh will ever really harm us; but if we, like David, allow our eyes wantonly to wander, and if in consequence we allow the impure thought to take up its abode within us, we are, we may rest assured of it, nigh unto a grievous fall and spiritual destruction. Consider for a moment, that such conduct is a wilful betrayal of ourselves to the enemy. We are wilfully exposing ourselves to his attack without any protecting armour,—since in this state of mind we cannot pray to be kept from temptation, because we are courting it; we cannot pray for God's grace to strengthen us against it, because there is no fixed resolve to avoid or resist it. We cannot read our Bibles for guidance, because they condemn

our conduct, and we have no mind to alter it; neither can we exercise that most needful duty of self-examination, because it would be hypocrisy and indeed distasteful to us. All the safeguards of our souls, therefore, are thus destroyed. Moreover, impure and lustful thoughts and feelings in themselves have a most corrupting effect upon the heart, spreading like leaven, destroying all that is pure and spiritual within us. We become by them totally unfit for any religious duty. The Holy Spirit of God can no longer make our hearts his temples. We grieve Him, we quench his pure light, and thus fall a ready prey to the spirit of darkness. If we continue in this state our fall will probably be still more complete, affecting the body as well as the soul. Although our present feelings may be when the thought of such a wickedness presents itself, "What, is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?" and we like the moth may fancy, that we can play with the light, and not be burnt by the flame, yet being deprived of the preserving grace of the Blessed Spirit through our own wilful indulgence of sinful passions, and left to the workings of our own natural lusts, the body too often partakes of the soul's corruption. It is true that worldly shame and disgrace may restrain some of us from gross and outward sins, even after the heart is corrupted, and the fear of God has lost its power. But this is far from being always the case,—we hear of too many instances to the contrary; but even suppose it to be so, still in the allowed indulgence of lustful thoughts no spiritual union can be maintained with God, who is the fountain of grace and life. There can be no concord between CHRIST and Belial. See, then, what follows; we are left alone to work out our salvation, in other words, to treasure up for ourselves wrath against the day of wrath and revela-

tion of the righteous judgment of God. Watch, my younger brethren, watch with prayer against the entrance of sinful thoughts into your hearts, if you ever wish for peace. Keep your hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life.

I have given you these two examples of temptation for your instruction and warning; but, as I said before, the means which our spiritual enemies employ are various,—they are as various as our several characters. I leave it now to you, each of you, to examine your own hearts, and learn whether there be in you any allowed wordliness drying up your spiritual life, any evil lust or temper which is hiding the light of God's countenance from you, anything in short which separates you from real life-giving union with God: and if there be, I implore you, as you value present peace and future blessedness, to put it away. Consider how more than commonly perilous is the state of a person who has for a long while and deeply (for it is a downhill path, there is no standing still,) fallen from God. He is not a person ignorant of his duty; if he were, when he has become acquainted with it he might repent and reform; neither is he a person unacquainted with the happiness of union with God; he has tasted that the LORD is gracious; he is therefore, while impenitent, in a much worse state as respects his salvation than others, since he sins against greater light, knowledge, and grace. What might prevail with them, has already been tried and rejected by him. It is impossible that his religious exercises can be continued, he feels them a mockery, and they are a distaste to him, and in general he knows too much to feel any satisfaction with the condition of the Pharisee—with mere formal worship—although some may perhaps cling to it as a plank in the shipwreck. At least, if he

is satisfied with it, it shews a very perilous state of heart indeed. But in general such characters are not satisfied with formal observances, and therefore in private no prayer is uttered, and this would seem almost at once to shut out their return to God. Moreover, if they cannot now overcome that worldliness,—that vice,—that hardness of heart which separates them from God, they are not likely to do so at a future day, since every year of separation from God, makes return more difficult: sin being like a poison, the longer it remains in the system the more deadly are its effects. It can therefore only be expected that their hearts will become more and more hardened, and that the sinner's only hope—the broken and contrite spirit,—is every day that passes less and less likely to be again experienced by them. Again, having so grievously offended by having so long kept away from God, they are themselves the less willing to approach and seek Him. Should they ever think of repentance and turning unto God, they are disheartened and distrustful of themselves. What confidence can they have in their own sincerity or perseverance? They are therefore almost given up to the tempter,—far more likely to fall lower than to rise. Indeed, how can they expect to rise? What argument or inducement can be presented to them which they have not already known, and experienced, and disregarded? And if the love of CHRIST, and if the fear of God have failed in keeping them in the right path, what hope can they have that such motives will restore them? How such reflections, when they do reflect, must aggravate their lot! Let us take warning, brethren.

But, let us suppose further, that disease overtakes them, as sooner or later it must, and that they are placed on a bed of sickness, perhaps of death. Can you imagine any situation more distressing? If they look back,

it is on mercy and goodness wilfully despised; if they look forward, they know too much to see anything but that consuming fire that will destroy such as they, whose sins deserve a severer punishment, because committed against so much greater light and knowledge. What hope then is there? Indeed I fear that if this declension is of long standing, there is but little hope. Their case seems to have some relation to that awful statement of the Apostle Paul, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the HOLY GHOST, and have tasted the good word of GOD, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of GOD afresh, and put him to an open shame." And although, from other parts of Holy Scripture, we may hope that this is some very extreme case, yet that the case of the Backslider is connected with it, and in some measure is included under it, there can be, I think, but little doubt.

In what a fearful state then, brethren, is the confirmed Backslider! With what earnestness should he seek to rouse himself, and strive once more to enter the strait gate, never heeding how narrow and difficult, if haply it may still be open to him! But here is the overwhelming difficulty; here is one of the Backslider's worst symptoms. He is too often in a state of spiritual paralysis. If you seek to appeal to him—to his hopes and fears, he may be alarmed and uncomfortable, but he makes no effectual answer; he seems in a state of stupor; a crowd of feelings, shame, distrust of himself, doubts, unbelief, seem to overpower him, and paralyse every exertion. If he could but rouse himself there might be hope, because, while the threatenings of GOD are so many and

awful against the wilful hardened sinner, equal in number and boundless in extent are the offers of mercy and promises of pardon to the penitent. However deep may be the depths into which he may have sunk, still "with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption."

Should any one of you then, brethren, at all resemble the character I have been describing, let me urge you, in the strongest manner, no longer to harden your heart, but to arise and go to your Father. I think I may say He is still your Father. By baptism you have been admitted as a child into his family, and although most undeserving of the relation, you are still his child; and therefore, I may say to you, that He is still your Father; and that there will be joy even now in heaven itself, if you will but arise and seek Him. Why should you hesitate? Do you ask, "Wherewith can I go before Him?" You may well ask. Do you say "What is the sacrifice that I must make to Him?" My fallen brother, there is one sacrifice which you can make, and which, strange to say, is sure of acceptance, and it is all the sacrifice that your heavenly Father requires. "The sacrifices of GOD are a broken spirit,—To this man will I look, saith the LORD, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Rest assured that a broken and a contrite heart your GOD will never despise. Dare then to think upon the past. Commune with your own heart. Call to mind the whole of your past conduct. Think that once you loved GOD and his ways, and walked in the liberty of his children; that the light of GOD's countenance shone brightly upon you, and you could feel, as well as use the endearing name of Father. And why cannot you now? Lay bare to your own view your aggravated wickedness,—how you have

trodden under foot the Son of God, and have done despite unto the Spirit of Grace. Try to see and feel, what an evil and bitter thing it is, to have departed from God, and sinned against Him as you have done. Pursue such thoughts, until like the Jews under Peter's preaching, you are pricked in your heart; and then, behold God's goodness! You are yet within the reach of mercy. Although his Spirit has been often striving with you, and striving in vain, still death has not stricken you,—the door of mercy is not yet shut. Join with such thoughts, the most lowly and earnest prayer, that God would remove from you your heart of stone, and give you again a heart of flesh, that you may feel and bewail your sins with a true and godly sorrow; and that again you may be sensible of the working of God's good and healing Spirit within you. Fear not to approach Him in frequent and importunate prayer. You might indeed, from shame, hesitate and fear; but God's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts; and you are commanded to come unto him and trust in his mercy. You are to believe that the blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanseth from all sin, even from yours, and to give honour to God's boundless grace, by suing for his mercy in CHRIST. Do this patiently; pursue this course of conduct, making use of every means of grace, which CHRIST, through his Church, affords you. Continue in watchfulness and well-doing, and in the name of my Lord and Master, JESUS CHRIST, I promise you, that, you shall again feel the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit of God,—the dew of his grace shall again refresh your long parched soul,—again shall you feel desires and yearnings after Him,—all in his own good time to be satisfied, for “thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Turn ye unto me, and I will turn unto you.”

Before I conclude, I will add a word of advice, applicable as well to those who stand as to those who have fallen. It is the warning of our Lord, not to one class only, but to all: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." You will have seen, that it is from a neglect of this command, that our unhappiness springs. Watchfulness teaches us the sins to which we are more peculiarly inclined, and the temptations which most easily beset us. It warns us of the evil thought,—the very first approach of the enemy, so important to be resisted and overcome; it warns us to flee from those companions, those books, those situations, which are likely to ensnare us by adding fresh fuel to our corrupt nature: while prayer, coupled with other religious exercises, will bring down from heaven into our hearts spiritual grace and strength sufficient to meet all our foes. Prayer, thoughtful meditation on God's word, attendance on the ordinances of the Church, the reception of the Lord's Supper, and a continuance in well doing;—these are the means, under God, through which your sins are weakened, your souls strengthened, and your nature transformed. Be constant, then, in the use of them; be also watchful and circumspect; exercise faithfully the grace you have; use the means of obtaining more, and more plenteous measures shall, from time to time, be given you: "To him that hath, more shall be given."

And remember always for your encouragement, that you have with you in your conflicts the Captain of the Host of the LORD, who has already triumphed over all your enemies, and who, even in your weakness, will conquer them again, if you are in heart his soldiers. You have also the promise, and the promise is true, and every faithful Christian daily finds it true, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." It is only the deserter and

the traitor over whom he can have power. "Be strong, then, in the LORD, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil," and "in patience possess ye your souls." Soon,—a very short while—and your painful warfare shall be accomplished, when you shall be received into everlasting mansions,—there with angels, and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, to praise and magnify God's glorious name for ever, and for ever.

A VARIETY OF STATION IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

BY THE

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ST. MATTHEW XXV. 14, 15.

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

WHEN the present life is regarded as a state of probation for a future one, an important question arises, in what respects the one is connected with the other;—whether the various distribution of talents which we see here, will have corresponding results in the future world; and men will be there treated differently, in the degree that they have diligently employed, or carelessly neglected their present opportunities?

In the text, the kingdom of heaven is said to be “as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods; and unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.” After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. He that had received five talents went and traded with them, and made them other five, and received this encomium from his lord—“Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I

will make thee ruler over many things ; enter thou into the joy of thy lord." He that had received two talents, also gained other two, and received a similar encomium ; and the slothful servant that had received one talent, and hid it in the earth, was condemned for his negligence, and adjudged to outer darkness, where was weeping and gnashing of teeth.

If this is a representation of what will occur in the case of human life, the doctrine of the text will be this,—that in the future kingdom of God, the reward of the righteous will bear some proportion to the progress they have made in holiness here ; and the punishment of the wicked will bear some proportion to the degree of their wickedness here,—that there is an ascending and a descending scale of glory and of punishment ;—and that when it is said, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," the meaning is not simply, that "he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; and he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting ;"—but that the future crop shall bear a strict proportion to the present sowing, and shall either return an intolerable harvest of evil, or a reward of righteousness, thirty, sixty, or an hundred fold.

If this view be taken of the subject, it places before us, in an important light, the nature of our present probationary state, and shows us of how great consequence it is, that we should so act in the management of the talents committed to us, that when we give in our account at last, we may do it "with joy, and not with grief."

For the most part, it is a mistaken notion that men form of their future existence, and of its connection with the present. They suppose that two states only await all men in the future world, stretching out into unvaried sameness ; and that in one or other of these, all shall

have their portion. It is true, even this idea, if firmly believed, would have a beneficial effect upon the conduct; for no man could look forward to a futurity which would bring with it to him, either a state of unalterable joy or sorrow, without being influenced by it. But if the idea could be brought home to the mind, not only that a certain futurity awaits all men, but that their state in it will be the result of that character which they are every moment impressing upon themselves; that the thoughts, and feelings, and habitual occupations, which now form their conscious existence, will be transferred with them to the other world, and determine their condition there; if the subject were contemplated in this light, it would have the effect of bringing it into a practical application to the business of men.

The future life which awaits us, will not consist in a mere local transition from one place to another. When men leave the present scene, it is not simply exchanging an earthly and temporal for a spiritual and eternal existence. The conscious and thinking soul carries within it the elements of its joy or sorrow; and, in its own imperishable existence, has the materials of what will make it happy or miserable to all eternity. If the soul has been holy here, the fruits of its holiness will be transferred with it to the other world;—if the soul has been prone to evil here, the consequences of its wickedness will also be transferred with it to the other world; and the condition of every individual there, will be the result of the whole career he has run, from the first breath of conscious existence, to his last expiring sigh.

When Jesus, therefore, said to his disciples, that the kingdom of heaven was like unto a man travelling into a far country, and appointing his servants certain tasks till his return, he shadowed out to men the nature of their

present duty. And in the reckoning which followed, and the apportionment of different rewards to different service, he shewed what shall happen at the conclusion of human life. All men shall then receive "according to their deeds." He who has been faithful amidst many temptations and abounding iniquity, shall be received by his Saviour with this benediction, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." On the other hand, he, who, in the midst of knowledge and the means of improvement, has neglected his duties; who has either buried his talent in the earth, or has employed himself in the active service of sin;—this man shall sink under a severer frown, and be repelled to a greater distance from the Judge: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

It is this relative adjustment of their future lot to the characters of men, which seems shadowed out to us by the parable of the talents. Not only are we taught that "the Judge of all the earth shall do right;" but that, in assigning the precise degree of each man's reward, or punishment, regard will be had to the whole history of every individual, throughout every step of his progress. From the first delivery of the talent, to the time when the account shall be given in, every thing must be reckoned for; and then, he, whose unremitting diligence enabled him to gain five talents, and he, whose less constant, but still laudable industry, had enabled him to gain two talents, and he, whose sullen and slothful spirit led him to bring back the bare talent committed to him, unemployed and unimproved, shall each receive their respective awards. To every man shall be rendered "according to that he hath done," and by this standard

they shall be judged, that, "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more*."

This principle brings home to the mind, the great importance of now giving all diligence to make a due improvement of those means of grace with which we are favoured. It is not, in general, because men give a total denial to their responsibility, and put the day of reckoning completely away from them, that they forget their present duties; but because they imagine, that some lucky change will set all to rights at last, and that however they may neglect the service of God, during life, they will, at length, turn to Him, in penitence and submission, at their last moments. But if they reflected, that the state of men in the future world, will have a direct reference to the various degrees of improvement made here, they would see, that every action of their present life, must have its corresponding results in eternity. If they bethought themselves, that the whole lot of man is to be taken into the account, and every means of grace to be reckoned for, their present duties and future responsibility would be seen as necessarily associated with each other. To every man God divideth severally as He will; but the same LORD who now imparts diversities of gifts, and enables different men to profit differently withal, has also provided, in the future world, different rewards for the different attainments which He has enabled them to make. The relation, therefore, between the service and the reward, is just as strict, as if men earned the wages which they received, and continued at their tasks till they had "accomplished as an hireling, their day." They can never, indeed, claim

* Luke xii. 48.

anything as of debt; and at the termination of their course, whatever attainments they have made, they must say, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O LORD; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified;" but still, the diligence which men show now, shall be the measure of their reward hereafter.

It may be said, that as it is not the good deeds which men perform, that entitle them to any reward in heaven, but the "righteousness of GOD which is by faith of JESUS CHRIST unto all and upon all them that believe*," that therefore, a simple reliance on this will be sufficient; that, at last, one prayer of faith, one believing look to the Saviour of sinners, will cancel all the ungodliness of a mispent life, and translate men into the kingdom of the just. But this is totally to mistake the nature of the Christian covenant. When the talent is committed to any man, his responsibility commences along with it. The design of the grace of GOD, imparted to the soul, is, that "the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin†." But when the life has been spent *in sin*; when the Saviour's grace has been slighted and despised; when the promptings of the Holy Spirit have been resisted;—to suppose that, by one momentary effort, the whole guilt of an ungodly life can be taken away, is to "pervert the gospel of CHRIST," and "continue in sin, that grace may abound." The parable shows us, that the slothful servant was *not* placed, at the time of reckoning, in the same situation with him who had been diligent and faithful from the first. On the contrary, the warning seems held out to us, that the negligence which men had shewn during life, would likely follow them to its close; that the consciousness of this would embitter

* Rom. iii. 22.

† Rom. vi. 6.

their hearts with fears, and lead them to regard God "as a hard and austere master, reaping where He had not sown, and gathering where He had not strawed;" and instead of approaching to solicit his forgiveness, induce them to retire from his presence in sullenness and despair. Therefore, let no man imagine, that he can omit his duties during life, and make sure, that, at last, his penitence and faith will arise. It is true that God is infinitely gracious, and "not willing that any should perish;" but it is of the nature of guilt to spread a haze over the mind, which obscures the divine benignity, and leads men to doubt whether they can be the objects of mercy. And in the scowling look and foreboding fears of the slothful servant, when called to his account, you have the image of many a sinner, in his last hour, when his bruised spirit retreats upon itself, and frowns defiance upon his Judge. In the actual arrangements of the future world, there will be room for all the varied degrees of attainment which we see on earth. There will be room for him who has received five talents, and improved them; and for him who has received two talents, and improved them; and for him who has received one talent which he has employed faithfully. There will be a portion for him who has been early called to the knowledge and fear of God, and whose path has been like "the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." There will be a portion for him who has been later in entering upon the ways of holiness, but who has, at length, in some thoughtful hour, been turned decidedly unto God. And there will be a portion even for him whose late-sprung penitence has been awakened, just as he was leaving the earth. In all these cases, "the mansions in our Father's house" shall receive their respective occupants; but still, the result will be, that

to various degrees of grace here, various rewards of glory shall be given hereafter, and to various degrees of wickedness here, various punishments shall be awarded hereafter; so that, the connection between the service and the reward, is still like that represented to us in the parable, where the good and faithful servant, who had gained five talents, was commended for his diligence, and the unprofitable servant, who had hid his talent in the earth, was punished for his neglect. Hence, you see the mistake of those who suppose, that, by one effectual and thorough repentance, they may wipe out all the errors of their life, and take their place, at last, among the spirits of the just. The kingdom of heaven is not *thus* "taken by violence." The divine mercy is ever ready to operate, and to obliterate the guilt of the greatest sinner who repents; but the place of such, in the future kingdom of God, shall depend upon the degree in which they have served Him here. "To sit on my right hand, and on my left," said JESUS, "is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." It shall be given to them who bear his image brightest now. It shall be given to them who show the highest examples of Christian excellence now; who prove that they are the children of their Father in heaven, by being like Him in character; by being "merciful, as He is merciful," and "holy, as He is holy."

It is not, then, either a momentary effort of virtue, or a momentary relapse into vice, which shall determine the character of the soul. It is the state and habit of the mind; the long and persevering practice through years of difficulty and trial; the "patient continuance in well-doing;" the "growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST;" or it is

a conduct of the opposite kind, by which the soul is hardened in sin, and becomes, at every step, more alienated from the things of God;—it is by this, that its future lot is determined. And this process, thus begun on earth, is capable of an unlimited progression in eternity. There is no height of glory, to which the godly man, by yielding to the influences of grace, may not aspire; and there is no depth of wickedness, into which the sinner, by neglecting the means of grace, may not sink.

And the practical point is, that this process is now begun, and carrying on, during this our day of life. The commencing steps are now taken in that course which shall have its result either in glory and honour, or in shame and everlasting contempt. Every man who awakes upon a career of conscious existence, and has faculties given him to discern right from wrong, sets out on a path which shall either lead upwards to the mansions of light in his Father's house, or downwards into the chambers of woe. And just as certainly as years have effect upon his body, and time will leave the marks of its progress upon his outward form; so certainly shall various habits pass over his mind, and leave that impress there, which shall bring him to the abodes of the righteous, or to those other regions prepared for the wicked one and his followers.

If during their present life, men exhibit the graces of the Christian character; if they feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of CHRIST, mortifying the works of the flesh, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things; in these habits of holiness, they find a commencing meetness for "the inheritance of the saints in light." If, on the other hand, they see in themselves no preparation for the kingdom of heaven, but are con-

scious that sin is daily extending its dominion over them, they must fear that they are in the condition of the barren earth, upon which the cheering light and the fertilizing shower descend in vain; which receives no blessing from God, but is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. And in the condemnation of the slothful servant who hid his talent in the earth, they may see their own fate. He supposed that he was guiltless, because he returned that which was committed to him. But what was the sentence? The talent was given him to be improved. He knew that an account would be demanded of him. He even anticipated the strictness with which this account would be exacted, and yet, he spent his time in indolence and inactivity. The sentence, therefore, was "Take the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents; for unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

No man, then, can divest himself of his responsibilities. He must either receive the reward of the faithful, or incur the doom of the slothful servant. And in either case, the amount of his reward, or of his punishment, shall depend upon the length and perpetuity of his service, or the length and perpetuity of his neglect. In all cases, the arrangement will be equitably adjusted between the means and the improvement of them; for our Saviour said to the men of his time, that their unbelief would leave them in a worse situation than the men of the old world; "Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida, for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes; but it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment, than for you."

This variety of station in the future kingdom of God, corresponding to the variety of improvement we make in the gifts of God here, is addressed to all the hopes and fears of man. If the future world drew none of its issues from the present, men might regard their transmission into it, with comparative indifference. They might be carried down the stream of life, as they are carried along with the vessel whose destination they do not know, and whose course they cannot guide. But it is not so. Every variety of character we see here, is preparing for its appropriate place in another world. Every germ of good, or evil, is ripening for its eternal destiny. And though we cannot tell the reasons why such different opportunities are given to different men,—why some receive five talents, some two, some one,—we see that this diversified arrangement is apparent in all the works of God. On the earth around us, and in the heavens above us, a similar variety prevails. The stately tree expands its branches to the sun, as well as the lowly shrub which grows beneath it. And the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handywork, and every star of light shines with its own particular splendour; but this is made an emblem to us, in Scripture, of what shall happen in the future world, at “the resurrection of the dead.” Every person shall then receive his appropriate place, and shine with his appropriate lustre. “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.” This consideration should remove a misleading idea from the minds of those who think of the future state as containing only two classes, the righteous and the wicked, and who conclude, that if they are within the limits of the one, by a scarcely perceptible line, they shall be safe; whereas, every variety of character we see here, is pre-

paring for its appropriate place in another world. The rewards will be showered down on the righteous, in generous profusion and overflowing mercy. They will be like the manna in the wilderness, where every man was filled according to his capacity;—"he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack."

But this capacity of being filled, is just, in other words, the degree of holiness which men have attained,—the improvement they have made of the talents committed to them. After the earthly course is finished, men are transferred to the invisible state, and there, a separation shall be made between the righteous and the wicked; but each shall "go away" into the respective places prepared for them. There are scenes of lofty and expanding magnificence, and visions of varied and increasing splendour, and realms of glory, stretching far beyond what eye can see, or imagination conceive; and in these, the righteous shall receive their appointed portion, according to the degree in which they are conformed to the image of CHRIST. On the other hand, there are regions of deepening and increasing gloom, prepared for the wicked; allotments of woe of heavier endurance; departments where the anguish of a guilty conscience strikes the mind with a deeper wound; and in these, the workers of iniquity shall be classed, according to their wickedness. And in estimating our preparedness for either, we must recollect, that the work is now begun, and carrying on, upon earth; that it extends through the whole period of our mortal life; that it is not a momentary change or effort either way, which shall fit men for the one, or for the other, but the habitual tenour of their conduct; that he who has gone on in a progressive advancement in Christian virtue, shall receive his appropriate reward in

the one, and he who has added iniquity unto iniquity, shall receive his appropriate punishment in the other.

When you hear, therefore, that the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods,—giving unto one man five talents, to another two, and to another one, consider that this is an emblem of your own state, and that according as you use your present opportunities, so shall your future lot be. If you have received five talents, and improved them, you shall be rewarded; if you have received two talents, and improved them, you shall be rewarded; if you have received one talent, and improved it, you shall be rewarded; but if you have misemployed the talents committed to you, be they many, or be they few, your doom shall be like that of the slothful servant who was cast into outer darkness, where was weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Carry forward your view, then, to this final arrangement, and ask yourselves the question, in *what* department of the future state, you are likely to find your abode? Shall your place be in the presence of God, “where is fulness of joy? at his right hand, where are pleasures for evermore*?” or shall you find your allotment among those “who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the LORD, and from the glory of his power†?” But it is not to the distant prospect, only, that you must look; for whatever your future place may be, it is now preparing, and shall be the result of that character you are every moment impressing upon your spirit. The daily habits of your life are forming the elements of your future reward, or condemnation. If the things that are true, and honest,

* Ps. xvi. 11.

† 2 Thes. i. 9.

and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, are the objects of your contemplation and practice; if the same "mind be in you, which was also in CHRIST JESUS;" if you are daily endeavouring to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life,—you have, in these habits, the earnest of your future blessedness. If, on the other hand, you are walking in the downward path of evil, and adding sin to sin, or even living in a criminal indifference to your eternal interests, you must fear that your appropriate place will be in those regions where the workers of iniquity must range themselves. Choose, then, whom ye will serve. Remember that the diligence and faithfulness you now shew, are the only tests of your sincerity, as the disciples of JESUS, and that He will receive, or reject you, at last, according to your present employment of the talents committed to you. And may He who gave you your place in life, and the means of grace, enable you to choose that "good part which shall not be taken away from you," and so sustain you by his Spirit, that He may "make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through JESUS CHRIST; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

THE CLAIMS OF THE CHURCH BUILDING SOCIETY.

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. ASAPH.

BY THE

REV. JOHN JONES, A.M.,

RECTOR OF ST. GEORGE'S, AND MINOR CANON OF ST. ASAPH.

NEHEMIAH XIII. 14.

Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.

IT is evident from these words, that Nehemiah expected that the LORD would remember his good deeds, and vouchsafe them a gracious recompense, notwithstanding defects in them, and sin in him; but to show that he did not think there was any proper merit or worthiness in them which required a reward as a debt in justice due to them, he explains himself in the 22nd verse, and desires to be rewarded, or rather pardoned, out of God's free goodness, according to the greatness or the multitude of his mercies. What, then, are the deeds with the remembrance of which we find the good Nehemiah solacing himself, and for which he calls upon the Most High to remember him? They are services done for the advancement in his country of the worship of God, and the religious instruction of the people. Jerusalem lay desolate. In the holy temple its services were unheard,—on the altar no sacrifice was laid, for there was a want of priests,—in the city no Sabbath was hallowed, for the House of God was forsaken. There, where once the

Church had been seen in all the grandeur of her Mosaic state, with the Law to instruct, and the Prophets to console her children, and the Ark of the Covenant, from before which was brought to them pardon and peace, now silence and desolation reigned; "The place of the fathers' sepulchres lay waste, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire*."

As this excellent man, (whose interesting history in the Book from which the text is taken, is worthy of your attentive perusal,) contemplated the decayed state of the church of his fathers, he wept. Actuated by a noble zeal for the glory of God, and the religious institutions of his country, he called into action all the resources he could command, that there might be restored to Jerusalem some degree of her former excellence.

Were personal services necessary? he went round the walls, surveying their state, and took measures for rebuilding them. Was the co-operation of others wanted for the accomplishment of his work? he reasoned with the nobles, and rich men, and rulers, till they were interested in the restoration of the order and worship of the House of God. Were contributions needed? all his servants were gathered to the work, and there were sustained daily at his table an hundred and fifty of the Jews, besides heathens; and he gave to the treasury of the work a thousand drams of gold, fifty and five hundred and thirty priests' garments†. His example animated others. There were given by the people to the treasury of the work forty thousand drams of gold, and four thousand two hundred pounds of silver, and three score seven priests' garments‡. By these means the waste places of

* Neh. ii. 3.

† Neh. vii. 70.

‡ Neh. vii. 71, 72.

Jerusalem were rebuilt; where the Sabbaths had been polluted, they were now kept holy: priests in sufficient numbers were procured, and appointed to their stated ministrations: in the temple were again heard the humble prayer, and psalm of holy praise. The Book of the Law of the LORD was once more read and explained in the ears of all the congregation: the sacred feasts, those pleasant remembrances of GOD's mercies to the children of men, were revived and celebrated each in its place; and Jerusalem was seen "shaking herself from the dust," and putting on her beautiful garments, while satisfaction and joy filled every bosom, in the hope that the LORD GOD would again dwell among them. The heart of Nehemiah glowed with delight, as he surveyed the fruit of his labours, and with a complacency which deeds of no other nature would have inspired, he exclaims, "Remember me, O my GOD, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the House of my GOD, and for the offices thereof."

That which strikes me, my brethren, in this passage of Holy Writ, and as connected with the object of this discourse, is the intimation which it plainly contains, that good deeds done for the houses of our GOD and for the offices thereof, are peculiarly acceptable in his sight: a doctrine which is confirmed in his Holy Word by the expressions of his approbation, received by David and Solomon and Josiah, and others mentioned in Scripture, on account of their beneficent deeds and pious exertions for promoting the knowledge and worship of his great name.

But why are works of this character so peculiarly acceptable to our Creator? The reasons are obvious, and sufficiently impressive to render us all desirous to have placed to our account in the Book of GOD, some memo-

rials of good deeds done by us for the advancement of religion, to the knowledge and fellowship of which He of his abundant kindness hath vouchsafed to call us.

It may be observed, 1st, That all benevolent deeds are pleasing to God. He is love; and from age to age, without slumbering or sleeping, is constantly occupied in doing good. When his children are engaged in benevolent works, they resemble Him. The greater the extent of their designs, and the more disinterested their motives, the more perfect is this resemblance. And the nearer to perfection the resemblance of Him is brought in any of his children, the greater must consequently be the complacency with which He beholds them; the higher the approbation He will bestow upon them.

And here it may be remarked, that deeds done for the advancement of his Church are of the sublimest extent, and most disinterested character. They are of the sublimest extent, for they embrace the interests of unborn generations, and the effects of them endure through eternity. They are of a very disinterested character; for the authors of them expect not to live even to see the fruits of their works. Every effort of societies of men, every exertion or benevolent deed of individuals, for establishing and extending the Church and the offices thereof, is a co-operation with the Almighty,—a co-operation with Him in promoting the accomplishment of purposes dear to his mind from before the foundation of the world; and to which He has applied his attributes, devoted his providence, and given his only begotten Son. How ennobling the thought of being workers together with God! How strong the obligation upon us to be so whenever it is in our power. When indeed I contemplate the Almighty as the rightful owner of all things, who has distributed portions of them as He has

seen fit among men, to be used for his glory and the good of his creatures; and behold his institutions languishing for want of the aid of the talents, or influence, or wealth which He hath given man, I see not how they with whom He had intrusted any of these gifts, can escape the imputation of withholding his own from God. I add, in the third place, that in Christians good deeds done for the benefit of his Church, are eminently becoming as a proper expression of gratitude to their Redeemer. Of his claim to your gratitude, it is not necessary for me here to speak. You have not now to be told of his love, nor of the greatness of the salvation He hath wrought for your race. I need not take you to Bethlehem and shew Him emptied of Divine glory, and for your sakes entering this miserable world in the humblest form of human existence. I need not conduct you over Judæa, and point him out to you, amidst cares and troubles, going about doing good. I need not lead you to the Garden of Gethsemane that you may look upon the unspeakable agony He sustains while He bears our griefs and carries our sorrows, and the LORD is laying on Him the iniquity of us all. I need not ascend Mount Calvary with you that you may see Him stretched upon the Cross, and pouring out his life a ransom for your souls. I need not turn your attention to the sacred volume and remind you of the blessed instructions in truth and righteousness which He hath left you. I need not direct the eye of your faith to the Throne of God, that you may behold Him there still making intercession for you, and sending from thence the Comforter that He may abide with you for ever. No: with these deeds of your Redeemer you are well acquainted; and there are hours, when overwhelmed with the contemplation of the greatness of his love, you are ready to exclaim with Job*,

* Job xxiii 3.

“Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to his seat!”

This leads me to observe, in the last place, that good deeds done for the advancement of religion in the world, may well be supposed to be peculiarly agreeable to the Most High, inasmuch as they are promotive of the best interests of our fellow-beings—his human children. For what is man without the instructions of his Maker; what is his condition where the light of God’s Word hath not shined? In every view that we take of him, the instructions and comforts of Christianity are the best benefits that we can provide for him.

You have heard that they who have fed the hungry, and given drink to the stranger, and clothed the naked, and comforted the sick, and visited the prisoner, shall be placed on his right hand when He cometh to judge the world. If these acts of charity to the bodies of men are so pleasing to our heavenly Father, with what high approbation must He behold those who assist in providing the means, whereby the soul that is hungry may be fed with the bread that came down from heaven, and the panting spirit have its thirst allayed at the fountains of life; whereby he who was a stranger to the Covenant of promise, may be taken into the congregation of CHRIST’s flock, and the naked soul be protected with the covering of the righteousness of its Redeemer, whereby the heart that is sick with the sense of its sinfulness may be visited by the Comforter, who will seal to it the overtures of forgiveness and pain; and they who are fast bound in the prison of the adversary with the chain of their sins, may be set free by that grace which destroyeth the power of the devil. Deeds of such charity are doubtless as delightful works as any which God sees performed by the inhabitants of this our world. Other acts of bene-

volence affect the perishable, these the immortal part of men. The comfort which the former afford is limited to this transient state, the benefits of the latter may be felt eternally.

You see, then, my brethren, how great excellence, utility, and hope of the Divine approbation belong to good deeds done for the advancement among men of religious instruction and the worship of God. It is to the performance of deeds of this character that I now invite you. The usefulness of the Society to which I more immediately solicit your aid, "The Incorporated Society for promoting the Enlargement, Building, and Repairing of Churches and Chapels," is attested beyond all contradiction by the number of parishes, more than 1,600, which have received its assistance in restoring, enlarging, or building Churches or Chapels; and by the multitude of individuals who are indebted to its bounty for access to the blessings of pure religious instruction and public worship. During each year of its existence, the Society has been instrumental in providing church-room upon an average for above 20,700 persons, having since its formation in 1818 assisted in providing additional church-room for 435,000 persons, of which number 318,000 are free and unappropriated.

It has no connexion with the Parliamentary Grants which have been made for the building of new Churches, but is supported entirely by voluntary contributions.

It has contributed the sum of £262,616 towards the procuring of this great increase of Church-accommodation; and has thereby given encouragement to the additional expenditure of more than one million and a half on the part of the different parishes which have applied to it for assistance. In this diocese, to different applications made, grants to the amount of little short of

£4000 have been received in the last four years. Its funds are now wholly exhausted, and numerous applications of the most pressing urgency continue to be made; indeed, so increasing are the claims upon the Society, that within two months after the statement last published in March, forty-eight additional applications for assistance have been received. Her Majesty having been memorialised, has been graciously pleased to issue a Royal Letter, read in this Cathedral Church on Sunday last, authorising the collection of voluntary contributions in aid of this Society. Such collections have been made under similar authority in three instances before since its formation in 1818, and each of them amounted upon an average to £35,862.

The Queen's Letter expressly requires, that the ministers in each parish do effectually excite their parishioners to a liberal contribution, a call which, to the best of my power, I most gladly obey, however deep my regret that it had not fallen into far superior hands to enforce its claims to your support. The existing churches of the country, at least all the ancient churches, have come down to us as freeholds; our forefathers were at the expense of providing them for us, and have left us the means of keeping them in repair. Let us not receive so great a boon from those who have gone before us, without feeling some like consideration for those who come after us. Of this Society there is a view, which upon my mind is so impressive, that I cannot but persuade myself it will fill every christian with joy, in an opportunity to contribute to the accomplishment of its purposes.

Suppose, that instead of my poor exhortation, our blessed Redeemer stood amongst us, and asked of you an alms to assist Him in carrying on the work upon which He came down from Heaven,—the enlightening, reform-

ing, and saving of mankind. Do I deceive myself when I imagine you hastening to Him with holy love, with fervent devotion, and emptying all your treasures at his feet. From the meek and beneficent JESUS, the most dissolute, I am sure, would not turn away without offering a portion of his possessions. The language of his disciples would be, "All that we have is thine." But, my brethren, the necessities of the Gospel are his necessities. When his religion solicits your aid, it is He that speaks. Plans for diffusing the blessings of his Church, present the same object which He would propose. "Inasmuch," says He, "as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

And, what can we do concerning which our Lord will be so likely to remember us? What acts are more meet in the days of your prosperity, than deeds done for the House of your God, and for the offices thereof? Of what works will the recollection be more solacing in the seasons of your adversity than of good deeds? To what transactions of your life will you look back with more pleasure, when you shall be entering the valley of death, than to good deeds? What works can you be more desirous to have rehearsed concerning you in the day of judgment, than good deeds done upon earth for the House of your God, and for the offices thereof? Give, then, ye rich, that of the abundance which He hath given you, a portion may be used to the honour of his name. And, you lovers of Christianity, who, if its Author were to put to you the question, which he put to the Apostle, "Lovest thou me?" would reply with a zeal not less than his, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee," assist by your oblations, to feed his sheep and feed his lambs.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

BY THE

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II. PETER III. 18.

Grow in grace.

THERE is not in this congregation any one so ill-taught as not to have learned the duty of advancement in spiritual character. More surely, there is no one here so hardy or so self-approving as to gainsay that, for himself at least, this is a personal and peremptory duty. Put the plain question in a homely and colloquial way,—“Are you as good as you ought to be? Are you not bound then to grow better?”—and I suppose that, even amongst those (if such be present here) who take but little thought about religious things, God does not at this moment see a single conscience, which withholds its silent witness to the need there is for spiritual improvement. Still more readily will those, who, in an ordinary degree, at least, have received religious impressions, and acquainted themselves with the requirements of God's law, confess that the language of confession is for them the most appropriate—that they “follow too much the devices and desires of their own hearts”—that they fall far “short of the glory of God”—and that there remains much progress for them still to make before they can be said to “lead a godly, righteous, and sober life.” But ask those who have been led into a

more decidedly religious tone of feeling, thought, and action—those who have really taken pains to learn the mind of CHRIST, and to conform their outward and their inward life to his requirement—those who have watched, and prayed, and striven—who have given the best culture that they can to the “seed of the word” in their hearts—whose conscience, “by reason of use,” presents the brightest surface and the truest mirror;—ask those who have been really “growing in grace,”—whether they have yet grown out of reach of St. Peter’s admonition in the text? whether they have attained to “perfect manhood,” and to “the measure of the fulness of CHRIST?” Ask them, if they still see any need to “grow in grace?” and it is likely that from them you will receive the humblest and most self-abasing answer of them all; or, perhaps, no other answer than the cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

But while there will be no denial anywhere of the needfulness of the Apostle’s admonition, it yet is not impossible that an injunction to advance, without prescribing the rate or limitation of advancement, may be exposed to misapprehension and misapplication in two opposite directions; by self-indulgent ease, on the one hand, and on the other, by unbalanced zeal. It is quite possible, that the very text before us may have suffered here and there under some such misconstruction. By the indolent and careless it may have been made a plea for leaving their spiritual nature to itself—fondly imagining that it may “grow” like the flowers of the field, while it is like them only in that “they toil not, neither do they spin.” Or on the contrary, it may have been cited (no doubt more pardonably) as an argument for forced, convulsive, self-defeating efforts after spiritual attainments, to the neglect of homelier and more common duties—which

duties would indeed have proved subsidiary to those higher attainments, had the latter been more healthily and orderly pursued. One of these misconstructions overlooks the *gradual* nature of true growth; the other, the *culture* that is needful to it.

Now, it is hoped, that a few hints towards both stimulating indolence and directing zeal in spiritual things, may be suggested in considering the text before us—regard being chiefly had to the peculiar nature of the progress there enjoined: “GROW in grace.” For, by way of confining our meditation at this time within convenient and practicable compass, I desire to notice, not so much the general principle, that advancement is needful, as the particular *method* of advancement, implied in the language of the text, and in the metaphor of *vegetation*, to which the expression “*grow in grace*” at once conducts the mind. I ask your attention not so much to the undoubted obligation under which we lie, of approaching somehow or other to a fitness for heaven, as to the peculiar kind and manner of approaching such maturity, which is conveyed in the word “growth,” and in the allusion to trees, and plants, and flowers, so often observable in Scripture. I mean the living, silent, gradual, but *unintermitted* progress of a thing that *grows*, as distinguished from the mechanical and intermittent advancement towards completion of some object that has to be manufactured,—such as a piece of furniture; a thing which, having no vitality, is dependent solely on some external agency, which may advance it or neglect it as caprice shall dictate. What I want to make appear is this:—that while a lifeless thing that has to be made—such as a watch, an organ, or a painting, may undergo suspension in its construction—advanced to-day, neglected to-morrow, resumed

next day, and so on, without prejudice to its ulterior perfection; a thing that lives and grows, on the contrary like a plant or like a tree (to which increase in spiritual stature is resembled), cannot, without damage, suffer any such abeyance; it must needs advance, though gradually, yet incessantly; and if checked in its career, if cut off from its sustenance, if its vitality be intermitted, it cannot be restored without great pains;—its very existence is endangered—perhaps the life that is suspended may not come back at all. Spiritual advancement must be not inanimate, but sentient and living; not noisy, but silent; not uneven, but gradual; not capricious and by starts, but uniform and unintermitted. The building of a house may be accomplished piecemeal—the formation of a Christian life must never pause; the one is constructed—but the latter grows.

And to explain still farther what is meant by this mere mechanical and lifeless condition, of which the progress is so different from the growth referred to in the text, let me suppose the making of a statue. The artist may proceed as dilatorily as he will—still the work need not ultimately suffer. He may one day prepare his materials, another he may lay his chisel to the marble; the rude block begins to take human shape; the work is advanced to a certain point of resemblance to what is intended to be portrayed. Something stops the sculptor; sickness, pleasure, the distraction of some other employment suspends his prosecution of this task. For days, for weeks, chisel and mallet may lie idle—the work advancing in no single feature. But the artist has this advantage: he finds, on resuming his labour, that all things are as he left them; the posture is the same—the eyeball has not shrunk—no muscle of the arm has shrivelled—nor has the image at all relapsed into its

original shapelessness. He may begin where he left off, and the design will yet be finished to his profit and renown. But not thus does it fare with that spiritual part of us which has to be shapen into the likeness of God. Here are two rival artificers;—one to make and one to mar. And if because of our indolence, our self-sufficiency, our heedlessness, or some more positive principle of sin, we provoke the spirit of a jealous God to pause from its divine labour herein, and to go forth from its gracious occupation of shaping our hearts into an image that shall please Him, then straightway will the ever-watchful spirit of sin seize its opportunity, and make entrance to the deserted workroom, and deface the beginning likeness, and mar its heavenly lineaments, so that it shall be a sore toil and an embarrassing task to restore the portraiture; if, indeed, the divine artist do not utterly refuse to know his own work again, and so despise the hideous shapeless mass, and cast it forth, with the refuse, to everlasting contempt. Ah! they understand not the nature of spiritual man who think that it can ever be stationary, any more than the vast ocean, with its restless tides, is stagnant. Forward it must go, or backward. Active it must be, for good or evil. It knows no neutrality. It must grow or rot.

And, therefore, answering to this truth, we find that the prevailing images under which spiritual life is set forth in Scripture are not lifeless and mechanical, and such as would allow of intervals and suspension in their progress, but it is represented under figures of unceasing vitality, and action, and advancement. A child that increases in stature; a soldier, not waiting for the battle, but engaged in it; a runner, pressing forward in the race; an athlete in the combat; a branch that bears fruit; grass that flourishes; wheat that ripens; a tree

planted by the water-side, whose leaf doth not wither, but brings forth its fruit in due season; in all which you will observe the principle of unintermitted life and activity, as indispensable to the true end of their existence.

But let us select the last mentioned metaphor, and trace some points of resemblance between the progress of a plant or tree, and the spiritual growth to which it is so often likened. And while the comparison cannot fail to give a sharp rebuke to indolence and indifference, it may, perhaps, suggest a useful caution to irregular and spasmodic vehemence.

First, then, we may observe, that the growth of a plant, though most distinct and perceptible in the result, is in the process silent, gradual, and unobserved. That it *has* grown since yesterday is manifest; that it was growing then, none could perceive—though easily, that it was in the way to grow. And this is equally true, whether it be observed of all observers, or secluded from the eyes of all—save One. Some precious bulb, brought from afar, and watched with daily assiduity; it grows no faster for the watching and the cost; it makes no haste to bloom because people are looking on. The aloe of a hundred years will not blow twice a century for all the world. The wild anemone, in the wild March weather, struggling through its obscure life in the rough hedge-row, grows no less though none observes—but it accomplishes its little task according to its season. Or, if it be an acorn, which the wandering wind has dropt in some remote recess, it strikes root even there, though none is there to see, and drinks the dew of heaven, and matures in silent strength, and sheds its fruit in time; and all this quietly; as beneath the eye of GOD. These do not sound a trumpet before them; nor, in restless self-con-

sciousness, bid men come and see the progress they are making—the stately oak—the costly exotic—nor the hidden hedgeflower. They do not glory in their advancement on the one hand—nor, on the other, are they querulous about their tardiness. Has this no meaning for us? They do not talk about themselves at all—but keep their place, and use their gifts, and do their task, and thus grow night and day—a silent mystery.

And it is thus the Christian grows in grace. It is thus the seed of spiritual life within advances to maturity. If Providence has placed him where he must be seen of men, there is no elaborate avoidance of observation (though, doubtless, preference will lean that way)—no affectation of retiringness—no evading nor embarrassing of a plain duty by the plea of modesty. Or, if he be set in the valley instead of on the hill, there is in that case no climbing to be seen of men; no calling of the left hand to witness what the right is doing. He has too real a feeling of the presence of God to think much, one way or other, of the presence of men. But it is not only with reference to the opinion of others, that this egotistic excitability is kept down. Self-contemplation, even the most private, will be controlled and modified by quietness and confidence in God. There will be no hurry to get on faster than God has appointed, nor than the ordinances of God will carry us. I am not answerable for the perversion of these sentiments by such as would cheat themselves by calling their short-coming, moderation. But, trusting to be frankly understood, I say again, that with him who is honestly trying to “serve God with a quiet mind,” there will be no substitution of the process of untimely *forcing* for that of timely *ripening*. Who does not know the insipid inferiority of forced and premature fruits, to those that are

brought forth in due season? The Christian, "living in his great taskmaster's eye," has no impatience, and, therefore, no enthusiasm. But he quietly pursues his course of trustful obedience; discharging at all times and places the allotted task of time and place, be it social or spiritual, public or private, active or contemplative, irksome or pleasant, observed or unobserved; and being rooted and grounded in love, and drawing his sustenance from CHRIST through the appointed means of grace, he grows night and day—in the day of joy, and in the night of trial; taking shower and sunshine thankfully alike; increasing secretly and in silence, but certainly, and in the end manifestly increasing in all that can adorn the Gospel of his LORD.

And, connected with the gradual nature of this growth, I remark another point of analogy. It baffles scrutiny to trace,—except in a mere general way,—by what a vast concurrence of varied and minute operations the plants of the earth are brought to their perfection. There must be adaptation of soil, and climate, and season. Prunings and waterings there must be, and shelter; and in many cases a daily assiduity. There must be sunshine and shower, and day and night; the dews of heaven—the nutriment of the earth—nay, even light and darkness are in their alternation indispensable. If one branch of a rose-tree grew by chance through the wall into a dark cellar, it would either die or bear pale roses; while those without would wear the healthy colour that God meant for them; for all these influences in their degrees are needful over and above the mystic principle of life, which we can only trace direct to God. Yet while we know that all these must concur to the true maturity of the meanest weed, it is impossible to tell what precise effect each particle of warmth and cold, of dryness, of mois-

ture, of natural or subsidiary soil, of freshening wind, or of calm mellow sunshine, may have on the result. You cannot calculate their precise bearing and corrective action one upon another, nor how they are collectively reproduced in the colour and exuberance of leaf, and flower, and fruit, but you know well, that each and all are needful to the general health and prosperity of the plant; it does not live entirely on sunshine, nor entirely on shower nor soil nor wind nor shelter—but on all. And surely this is not without its correspondence in the spiritual kingdom. Have we not various callings, various duties, trials, joys, and sorrows, labours, relaxations, mercies, chastisements, that not only cannot be evaded, but ought not to be dispensed with for our spiritual discipline and culture? It would be too curious to ask, how each of these precisely may be acting for our good; but faith need not surely shut its eyes before assenting to the truth, that all these, duly entertained, are acting in concurrence to one end—the perfecting, namely, of the faithful. Spiritual life is not sustained entirely by things that may seem at first sight to have the closest affinity to it; not entirely by going to church for instance; nor entirely by things more foreign, such as secular activity; nor by any, singly, of the various elements of labour, relaxation, worship, joy, and pain, by which it is surrounded; but by all combined for the reception of God's blessing, who will proportion them according to the need of his obedient children. And herein let us be reminded of the almost endless complication of duties, the multiplicity of little observances, the grateful enjoyment of mercies, the patient endurance of trials, the fulfilment, day by day and hour by hour, of the manifest duty of the day and hour, which must concur to that maturity of spiritual condition which is

the end for which we live; how every minutest thought we think, every slightest deed we do, every trivial word we speak, has its portion in preparing us for our everlasting destiny. And thus, while on the one hand every proud, revengeful, and uncharitable thought—every slight breach of truth, of honour, of honesty, of reverence for God and his laws—every petty act of fraud, of falsehood, of unkindness and irreverence—and much more, every larger and more signal deed of wrong, is forwarding us in the accomplishments of Satan and his angels; so, also, is the man who is seeking to purify his soul by unfeigned love of truth—who lives an honest, manly, unaffected, useful life—who cherishes all holy and spiritual affections—who seeks out every occasion, and makes the most of it, for deeds of mercy and love, from large and costly charities, which few can compass, to small amenities and little kindnesses, which all can do—following quietly but steadfastly, and to the best of his ability, in the meek footsteps of his Saviour—that man is ripening for heaven, and is bringing himself, by the blessing of God upon all, into a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Ah! what necessity is herein suggested to us for watchfulness and prayer, with reference to little things!

Let us revert for a few moments to that principle of UNINTERMITTED progress, already noticed in vegetation. What effect a few days' separation from its source of nutriment would have upon a plant I need not say—it would reverse the promise of Scripture; its leaf would wither, and it would not bring forth its fruit in due season. Now I believe that the chief defections of such as have ever thought at all about religion are mainly attributable to this, viz., their allowing themselves some *little* licenses, and saying, "It cannot matter much if I neglect this little duty—if I indulge in this

little sin; or (what is the same thing) if I permit myself this short suspension of spiritual growth and advancement;" for of course every neglect of duty, as well as every act of sin, *is* a suspension of spiritual growth—no one can be growing in grace who is not doing right. I do not now inquire whether any sin against GOD can be measured by any human gauge, of large or less; but supposing, what I dare not grant, that one little neglect, one short abeyance of spiritual life, can do no great harm, I will but ask this, as apposite to growth and ripening in grace;—If you heard a husbandman or a florist talking thus of his fruitage or his plants:—"It can be no great mischief that for once I fail to water them; to leave them unsheltered for one night can be no harm; one single week's indolence, though I leave spade, and pruning-knife, and weeding instrument untouched, cannot be fatal"—perhaps not. I cannot tell. It might be difficult to measure the amount of mischief done by one single neglect of culture, or of watering, or warmth. But which of you that heard a man so speak would believe that such neglects were likely to be few or trivial?—who would doubt that they would multiply and accumulate?—which of you would hire such a man for your servant?—which of you that heard him thus idly plead for individual neglects would hesitate to say, that those neglects would increase in number and extent, and, though he had acres of olive-yard, and vineyard, and of costly plants, yet that, however the kindly forces of nature might befriend him for a year or two, let but a few years pass, and to him spring would come leafless, summer without bloom, his autumn barren, and his winter famished? And is man's spiritual nature so hardy and so healthy a thing, that it needs less culture than the most delicate flower from the tropics? Is even one single suspension of growth likely to do no

mournful damage to a plant so frail? And if even one single neglect (deliberate neglect I mean) might be of so slight mischief as to be passed over in the account, are you not sure, that he who calmly and with no misgiving pleads for it, is in a downward way?—that his omissions are likely to accumulate—his heart to harden, and therefore his salvation to be in peril? Not that the mercy of God is ever withheld from the penitent, but that repentance becomes less probable with every presumptuous sin.

For, blessed be the name of God, there is this point in which the resemblance fails between our souls and those natural images under which their progress is set forth. Five minutes of real suspension, and human life is gone. As many hours of separation from its nourishment, and the flower flourishes no more. As many days uprooted from its soil, and it is not likely that the hardiest tree will ever bear leaf and fruit again. But the mercy of God endureth for ever. His long-suffering is so great, that it would be presumption in us to define its limits. He is “strong and patient”—as patient as he is strong, though he “is provoked every day.” He is of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil. We have an Advocate, that pleads even for the fruitless vine:—“Let it alone for this year also, and if it bear fruit then it is well.” Therefore let none fear, if he come in repentance and faith to CHRIST, that he will be in anywise cast out. Let him only fear, that every deliberate neglect to grow in grace will make his desire to come to CHRIST less probable. And let him tremble to indulge in any presumptuous pause in his advancement, not only lest it should become a deep and deeper habit to be dwarfed and fruitless, but lest at any moment, ere he thinks, the irresistible sentence should come forth, “Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?”

Let us remember, too, that it is peculiarly true of vegetation, that its culture must be managed with reference to *seasons*. Men do not in the world of nature transpose the various duties of the seasons. They do not plough and plant in summer—weed and prune in autumn—reap in winter. Hence, let us learn at every hour and season to do the proper duty of the time; not taking thought for the morrow, but trusting to God that he will teach us the duty of to-morrow when it comes, and give us strength to do it. There is a time for all things. There is a time for fast and festival—to laugh and weep. There is a time for joy; and grief will make itself a time. Work—worship—rest—all these will take their turn; and all, if duly used under the blessing of the LORD of all, will be concurrent to the one great object—“Grow in grace.”

Remember, finally, that we are all children baptized into CHRIST's household, and are to grow to the full stature of Christian character; all runners in that race, which, if we abandon, we must lose the prize; all warriors, who must fight for the cross if they would wear the crown. For at our birth the triple armies of Sin, the World, and the Flesh, sent forth their champion, Satan, to fling down the gauntlet, and in baptism we took up the gage, and swore to be CHRIST's faithful soldiers and servants to our lives' end. We are all plants in the vineyard, placed there to grow and ripen, till the Lord of the harvest shall come to claim his own, and gather it, if it have grown and ripened, into his everlasting garner. And of whatever earnest faith you may be conscious, with whatever ardent hope possessed, whatever charity, with its self-denying obedience and endeavour, may manifest itself in your lives, still do not spurn at admonition, but remember that CHRIST's chiefest saint—the foremost of

them all—said this:—"I count not myself to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in CHRIST JESUS * !"

* Phil. iii. 13, 14,

FORSAKING THE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES.

BY THE

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PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S, AND PERPETUAL CURATE OF ALLHALLOWS
STAINING.

HEBREWS X. 25.

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.

THE belief of the existence of a God being once firmly infixed in the mind; whether by the deductions of reason, or (which is far more probable*) from tradition derived from our first parents; the obvious and immediate consequence is, the acknowledgment of His power and goodness, and the wisdom and expediency of our propitiating the one and conciliating the other. Hence we find that in every nation prayers were addressed to that object, whatever it might be, whom they conceived to be the Supreme Being.

But as man stood in a double relation to his Maker; not only as a private individual, but as a member of a community; public prayers and public thanksgivings were to be added to private devotions; since private praises were no due acknowledgments for public benefits. Hence arose the institution of an order of persons appointed for this purpose; temples dedicated to the service of their deities, and sacrifices and a form of worship, to deprecate their anger or engage their favour. Thus far even the light of natural religion directed men.

* See ELLIS *On the Knowledge of Divine Things*.

But let us leave the light of nature, and turn to the holy page of Inspiration. We find, in the earliest times, Cain and Abel offering a sacrifice*; Seth and his posterity calling on the name of JEHOVAH†. On the renovation of the world, Noah's first act was to build an altar, and offer sacrifice‡. Melchizedek is described as the priest of the most high God§. Wherever Abraham pitched his tent, he instantly erected an altar||, as did his descendants, Isaac¶ and Jacob**; till at length it pleased GOD to give particular directions for the construction of a tabernacle devoted to His service††, and hallowed by His presence‡‡; and of an altar, and a formal and copious ritual directing the manner in which worship should be regularly and daily paid to Him; and the consecration of a body of priests and ministers, set apart for His peculiar service§§. He who neglected this service, or infringed its regulations, was to be cut off from GOD's people. This tabernacle was brought to Shiloh, and then removed to Jerusalem; till the ark of GOD's presence was at last enshrined in the magnificent temple of Solomon, and the service of GOD was continued till the temple was destroyed.

With the restoration of the Jewish polity the renovation of the temple service was nearly simultaneous; and continued uninterrupted, till it was superseded by a more spiritual religion. The substance being come, the types and shadows were to be done away|||. Much of the ritual, and much of the ceremonial, was abrogated; but the worship of GOD was still continued with outward formu-

* Gen. iv. 3, 4.

† *Ib.* 26.

‡ Gen. viii. 20. § Gen. xiv. 18.

|| Gen. xii. 7, 8; xiii. 18.

¶ Gen. xxvi. 25.

** Gen. xxviii. 18; xxx. 5, 14.

†† Exod. xxv., *et seqq.*‡‡ *Ib.* 22.

§§ Exod. xxix.

||| 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

laries and spiritual feelings of devotion. The apostles went up into the temple at the hour of prayer; their converts continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers; and the whole Christian community "continued daily with one accord in the temple, and, breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people*."

It is true that, during the persecution of the heathen, the Christians were forced to meet secretly in private houses, and "in dens and caves of the earth;" but when protection was given to them by the ruling powers, and Christianity became the religion of the empire, then churches and Christian temples reared their heads; and the regular form of congregational worship, which had originated with the apostles, was openly revived, and duly continued. The Bishops presided over their respective dioceses; the several Church communities were under the guidance of their particular pastors; these looked to the Bishop, as the centre of union, and submitted to his directions. They, following the advice of the blessed Martyr, St. Ignatius, the contemporary of the apostles, would "do nothing without the Bishop; they were careful not to set themselves against the Bishop, that they might be set under God." Much also of the ancient Liturgies used by the Apostles and the primitive Fathers is still in being; and much of them has been transplanted into our excellent Common Prayer.

Such is the goodly platform of our Church, in obedience to the apostolical injunction, "Let all things be done decently†." Originally there was a church to

* Acts ii.

† 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

each parish, sufficient for the accommodation of the parishioners; ministers to each church, to teach, and supply the spiritual necessities of the flock; a cathedral in each diocese, as the residence of the Bishop, to whom the clergy might resort for counsel and direction; and a Metropolitan in each province, who, in conjunction with his Bishops and clergy, might frame canons and ordinances for the maintenance of discipline, and the regulation and protection of the whole ecclesiastical body.

The increase of population, the extension of manufactures, and, still more, the unprincipled speculations of the covetous, who make money their god,—and the spoliation of the Church, have grievously impaired this beautiful system. While many a noble and spacious church is comparatively empty, even if all the inhabitants of the parish should attend it; thousands and tens of thousands have no church to which they can resort, because they, who “grind the face of the poor*” to procure for themselves “the meat that perisheth,” will not supply them, in return, with that “which endureth unto everlasting life†.” History informs us that a curse has followed *those* families whose fortunes were founded on the robbery of the Church‡; and awful is the responsibility of those who transplant multitudes to a hitherto desolate spot, and make no provision for their spiritual wants. Our posterity will see whether it will be well with them at the last. Even now they are suffering for their inhuman and unchristian conduct, in the commotions, combinations, and riots of the untaught and neglected beings whom they have brought together to live “without God

* Isai. iii. 15.

† John vi. 27.

‡ See SIR H. SPELMAN'S *History and Fate of Sacrilege*.

in the world," who have no other object than to get and to spend money. Can it be wondered that, having "sown the wind," they have "reaped the whirlwind *?" If the people are "destroyed for lack of knowledge," what, think ye, will be *their* doom who, when they might have supplied it, did it not?

It is to co-operate in remedying this evil, as far as our limited means will allow, that I devote your contributions at our weekly offertory to our four Church Societies.

The *National Society* gives to the children of the poor the elements of education in the principles of the Established Church. The *Society for promoting Christian Knowledge* takes up the good work where the other leaves off; and by distributing, at the lowest rate, Bibles, Prayer-books, Testaments, and Psalters, and religious tracts on all the doctrines and duties of Christianity, and even books of amusement and general instruction, tends to foster the good seed already sown, and to build up in the Christian faith those who have been early trained in it: while the *Society for Building and Enlarging Churches* endeavours to supply that accommodation for the public worship of God, the want of which is a disgrace to our nation, and a foul blot on those whose duty it is to remedy it. And the *Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts* extends, to the utmost of her means (alas! how circumscribed by false economy), to those of our fellow-subjects in distant lands—by whom our commerce is enlarged, our luxuries supplied, and our empire extended—the blessings of that Gospel of salvation, which it is the duty of every Christian, sensible of its blessings, to make known to the ends of the earth. I wish you would enable me to contribute in equal pro-

portion to the *Society for supplying additional Curates in large and populous districts*, where one clergyman is supposed to have ten thousand or more under his care. To these it is impossible for an individual to attend; and this Society supplies regularly-ordained curates, not so much to alleviate *his* burden, as to provide for his destitute flock, almost like “sheep without a shepherd.” If those who ought to remedy this want, and have the power, yet *will* not do it, let us, my brethren, whom God has blessed with the *will*, though we may not have the same means, supply, to the utmost of our power, their blameable deficiencies.

The theory, then, of our Church polity is comely and decent, and the practice should be universally adopted among us where the means are afforded. God should be worshipped for his power and his goodness, because such worship is due unto Him; and such worship should be paid in our *parish* church, for the sake of maintaining order and avoiding confusion. “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints.” “Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men;”—that they “would exalt Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders *!”

Yet how many thousands are there who never avail themselves of the opportunities offered to them!—who have never entered into the house of God since they were there enrolled as his servants, or, perhaps, when they were married, or when they have mocked God by acting as sponsors at baptism for a little child, and in its name promising both to believe and to do, what by their own conduct they openly disavow;—who, except on these occa-

* Pss. lxxxix. 7. cvii. 31, 32.

sions, will never again enter the church till they are carried there a corpse? See with your own eyes, or hear, or read the accounts (for, alas! they are too faithfully chronicled) of the countless myriads who go on their parties of pleasure, by steamboat or railroad, on every LORD's day! Nay, shudder at the avowed impiety with which *increased facilities* for dissipation and amusement are *advertised* previously to the most solemn Fast of our Church, or her highest Festivals!

No one would grudge these persons their *pleasure*, if they would make it consistent with their *duty*; if they would make the worship of GOD their primary object, and then unite rational amusement with it. Many a mechanic has no other day of relaxation than the Sunday; but he has likewise no other day for attending to the concerns of his soul. If he can with decency unite both, I am not he who would forbid him. Still, let him reflect whether of the two is of the greater importance. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul*?" I do not say that the LORD's day is to be observed with the rigid strictness of the Jewish Sabbath; but I do say that the laws of GOD enjoin that *one* day be devoted to His service—that CHRIST, by his example, and his apostles, sanctioned the observance of the *first* day of the week, and that the laws of the land enforce, or at least endeavour to enforce the observance.

Have, then, these persons no understanding? Are they dead to all sense of shame and gratitude? Is GOD so completely from their thoughts, that they will neither praise Him for benefits received, nor supplicate Him for future blessings? Is all their time to be devoted to their own gratification, and none to Him? Is redemption by

* Matt. xvi. 26.

the blood of CHRIST so trifling a gift, as never to require any acknowledgment? Do they need no spiritual strength? Are they so just as to "need no repentance," to require no forgiveness,—so sufficient as to need no support? Talk to them of these things, and they will say with the fool, "What is the matter*?" nor will they know the error of their ways till, on the bed of sickness and of death, they will look back with horror on their past life, and cry too late for "mercy when it is the time for justice†."

Others, again, who are deeply imbued with a sense of their religious obligations, and would on no account omit their bounden duty of prayer and praise, of confession and thanksgiving to God, yet forsake "the assembling of themselves together." They go regularly to *church*, but not to their *parish* church. God forbid that I should say that these are equally criminal with the former, yet I know not how to appreciate their error. The *violation* of a duty may be less culpable than the *total neglect* of it, and an approximation to *schism* may be more venial than *absolute irreligion*. Yet, surely, in each case, the offence is grave; and what is the reason that induces them thus to violate order and Church discipline? To show their displeasure with their Minister, and to wound his feelings. Such at least are the motives generally avowed, and even recommended in some of the channels of daily information. They accomplish their purpose, but not as they intended. They *do* wound the feelings of their Minister, but it is for *them* he feels, not for *himself*! A conscientious Minister of the Gospel holds it "a light thing to be judged of man's judgment†." If his congregation should consist but of the two or three with whom CHRIST has

* Eccus. xxii. 8.

† Communion Office.

‡ 1 Cor. iv. 3.

promised to be, when gathered together in His name*, he will read the prayers with the same devotion; he will meditate his sermon with the same care; he will preach it with the same energy, as if his congregation consisted of two or three thousand. For he preaches "not himself, but the Lord JESUS CHRIST†." But he deeply feels for those who commit a *positive sin*, in order to escape a *probable inconvenience*.

But perhaps they will advance a more specious plea, and allege that they thus act for the sake of greater edification. But they pull down rather than build up the body of CHRIST, by thus separating from that portion of it to which they belong. And if edification be taken in the sense of spiritual improvement, in which sense they seem to adopt it, can they expect a blessing from God, while they are thus impairing the unity of his Church, and violating the apostolical injunction, "Obey them that have the rule over you, for they watch for your souls‡" that rule over you, not "as being lords over God's heritage," but as partakers of the common joy in which all the members of His Church share. How can the shepherd take care of the flock, if they will overleap the fold!

They are dissatisfied, perhaps, with the *doctrine* of their Minister. One person may fancy that the teacher does not dwell sufficiently on the efficacy of faith, and enforces too strongly the necessity of good works, and the importance of a holy life; another, that he disparages the free gift of God, by insisting on the conditions of the Christian covenant; a third, because he denies the tenet of absolute and irrespective election and reprobation; and a fourth, because while he allows the privilege of

* Matt. xviii. 20.

† 2 Cor. iv. 5.

‡ Heb. xiii. 17.

private judgment, he contends that it is to be referred to the decision of the Church.

Now, if they have sufficient learning and judgment to discern the falsity of the doctrine, they have also sufficient to provide that it shall not hurt themselves; but especially have they sufficient to teach them, that they ought not to make an apparent schism in the body of CHRIST'S Church. Besides, they have a remedy in their own hands. Let them apply to the Bishop, or to the Archdeacon, (and the opportunity of doing this occurs twice every year at his visitation,) and let them substantiate the charge of erroneous doctrine, and the obnoxious minister will soon be removed. Such has often been the case; such it has lately been; and such, I trust, it will ever be, so long as a minister is forgetful of his sacred duties, and his congregation mindful of their own.

Or, it may be, some *ceremony* has given offence. Now all the ceremonies that have been complained of are principally things *indifferent*; not worth the committing a positive sin to avoid. For a *positive sin it is, to violate ecclesiastical injunctions, even in things indifferent, and to introduce disorder into the house of God.*

A third description of persons "forsake the assembling of themselves together" in a yet more culpable manner. They will attend the ministrations at their *parish church* on one part of the day, and the *meeting-house* on the other. This shows either a grievous lack of sound knowledge, or of religious principle. In fact it evinces that they have no fixed religious principles, since they halt between two opinions. "If JEHOVAH be GOD, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him*." If, on conviction, you adhere to the doctrine and discipline of the Church

* 1 Kings xviii. 21.

of England, do not belie your conviction by attending the assemblies of those who dissent from her either in the one or the other. *Dissent* implies disagreement with the Established Church. *Both* cannot be right; one or other must be in error; and God will not be mocked. He may be worshipped in sincerity (God forbid I should doubt it) in the conventicle and in the Church; but He cannot be worshipped sincerely, by the same individual, in *both*. “Be not,” then “of doubtful mind*.” If in the Church you pray to be delivered “from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism†,” do not thwart your prayer, by joining in the assembly of heretics and schismatics. “Prove all things:” that is, Weigh well the arguments in defence of any sect of dissent, and in support of the Church, and then “hold fast that which is good‡.” “Be ready to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear§.” Let *that* answer be the result of the conviction of your own mind, and then no longer waver with any other “wind of doctrine.”

There yet remains another description of persons, they who attend their parish church in the *morning*, yet forsake it in the *evening*. These may be divided into two classes: they who attend not the evening service anywhere: and they who do attend it, though not in their parish church. Each are wrong, though in a different degree. If the worship of God be a duty; it is a duty equally incumbent upon his servants in the evening, as in the morning: the evening sacrifice was His institution and appointment, as well as the former. The Apostles “went into the temple at the hour of prayer,

* Luke xii. 29.

† 1 Thess. v. 21.

‡ Litany.

§ 1 Pet. iii. 15.

being the *ninth* hour," no less than at the *third*. Here then is a neglect of duty; and no duty to God can be neglected without incurring much danger. The other class, to whom I have alluded, are blameable, though by no means in an equal degree. They are fully willing to attend the worship of God twice on his sacred day; but they will do it in their own way, and not as the Church has prescribed; and consequently they are violators of order. Their excuse, probably, will be, that the time of divine service is inconvenient. But who is to blame? The Church has not altered her hours, but they have changed their own. And those of their fellow-parishioners, who are not aware that they attend a later service, are hurt at seeing *that* unity violated, which it is the object of the Church to maintain.

Union among His immediate followers, and union among those who should succeed them, form a prominent petition in our Lord's affectionate prayer for his disciples which He offered just before He left the world to go to his Father.

"Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as we are. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us: And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me*."

The earnest exhortation of St. Paul to his converts

* John xvii. 11, 20—23.

was, that they should endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*.

Would to God, my Christian brethren, that we would strive to give effect to the prayer of our kind Redeemer; that we would comply with the exhortation of his Apostle: that all of us, whether clergy or laity, (for we are equally interested, both having one God, one faith, one baptism, one and the same glorious hope of our calling, looking to the same prize, the crown of glory,) would "walk by the same rule, would mind the same thing," not bandying to and fro harsh names and "railing accusations," but making allowances for our mutual infirmities, and forbearing one another in love.

Join with me, in conclusion, my brethren, in that beautiful prayer of our Liturgy†, which, if we would truly enter into its spirit, and exemplify in our practice, if we would add it to our daily prayers and family devotions, would soon, by God's grace, make our Church, like Jerusalem of old, at "unity in itself," and "the joy of the whole earth."

"O GOD, the Father of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace, give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions. Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord: that as there is but one body, and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one GOD and Father of us all, so we may henceforth be all of one heart, and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind, and one mouth, glorify Thee; through JESUS CHRIST our Lord. Amen."

* Eph. iv. 3.

† For Unity.

CHRISTIANS WITHOUT EXCUSE.

BY THE

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ST. JOHN XV. 22.

If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin.

THESE words are part of our Saviour's farewell address to his disciples, when the time was fast approaching at which He was to be taken from them. At that trying hour JESUS was still himself—still the same affectionate and endearing master that He had been throughout his short, but eventful ministry. A deceiver would have left his followers with heartless indifference to their fate, when he saw that his career of fraud was speedily about to terminate in exposure and disgrace; but JESUS, as says the Evangelist, “having loved his own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end,” and employed the last hours of his intercourse with them on earth in preparing them for the trials which He well knew would be their portion at the hands of an unbelieving and persecuting generation. The burden of his last words is, “Let not your heart be troubled;” and indeed there is scarcely any powerful topic of consolation, applicable to the condition and sufferings of the first preachers of Christianity, which is not briefly touched upon in the course of the address to which I have referred.

It is of the world that our Saviour speaks in the verse which I have taken for my text; the world which

throughout the Gospel is represented as directly opposed to CHRIST and his disciples. He is strengthening them by his counsel against the fierceness of this opposition; and in exhorting them to make up by closer union amongst themselves for the loss of those friends whom their profession would estrange from them, it is thus that He proceeds; "These things I command you, that ye love one another: if the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. . . . If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: but all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not Him that sent me; if I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin."

That they had not had sin if CHRIST had not come and spoken to them himself, is a saying which must be understood with certain modifications.

For, first, if we suppose our Saviour to be speaking of the unbelieving Jews alone, they certainly had had sin, though in a less degree, and had been guilty before God, though not so deeply, if CHRIST had not in his own person preached repentance to them. They who had killed the prophets, and stoned them that had been sent unto them, and had forgotten the GOD who had been so abundant in his loving-kindness to them and their fathers, and had set up idols in His stead, how could they have been innocent and clear when they were judged, even though they had not added to their other sins this, the consummation of them all, the rejecting, and crucifying God's only and well-beloved Son? But, still, if CHRIST had not come unto them,—had He

not reproved them so plainly of their faithlessness towards the Father, and persuaded them so earnestly to return to Him from whom they had so long fallen away,—had He not first by his miracles established his claim to be heard as the ambassador of Heaven, and then told them on Heaven's high authority that himself was the way, and the truth, and the life,—however they might have sinned in other respects, and they did so most grievously, yet their guilt had been but as that of Tyre and Sidon—the guilt of ignorance and not of wilfulness.

Or, secondly, if the words have reference to the world at large, (and it is thus that we shall consider them in the present discourse, and so bring more home to ourselves the warning that they convey,) we cannot read St. Paul's description (Romans i. 18—32,) of the state of wickedness in which the whole heathen world lay before CHRIST's appearance, without being convinced that however his coming and being rejected may have aggravated the world's condemnation, still guiltless they were not, even under all their disadvantages, whilst they so heinously transgressed the various commands of natural religion and were so slow to perform those duties towards each other which we need no revelation to assure us are binding upon all. But it must be conceded that, in the same proportion in which man's natural sense of right and wrong is less to be relied upon than the expressly declared will of God—in the same degree that the light of human instinct is feebler than that of the risen Sun of revelation—so much more excusable was the iniquity of the world before CHRIST than now it can be under CHRIST; for now, said that heavenly Teacher, they have no cloke, no excuse for their sin. So that wherever his Gospel has since been preached by his apostles and their successors, and preached in vain, it is an awful consideration that so far

from Christianity standing between God's anger and the sinner, it does, in fact, make sin more exceeding sinful, by leaving him that will persist in it entirely without excuse.

Now, my brethren, this scripture, thus universally applied, conveys a warning to you all. Are you Christians indeed, or Christians in name only, whilst in reality you are of the world? If so, then consider with me how reasonably it may be said of you that you stand without excuse.

On cases of open and notorious guilt we need not dwell. The consciences of such sinners already tell them, or on their death-beds will, that whatever cloke there may be for others' sins, there is none, alas! for theirs. I would rather speak now of characters that look more fair, but are lukewarm and unspiritual, like Laodicea of old. And these are "of the world," perhaps without suspecting it, either, first, because they love too much the things that are of the world; or, secondly, because they value too little their Christian privileges. We will take each class separately.

I. If you fall short of the character of true disciples because of your setting your affections too much upon the things that are of the world, it is easy to prove that you are without excuse. You have the Bible, and you find it written, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things (food, that is, and raiment, and the other necessities of life,) shall be added unto you." Do you believe this? If you do not, why do you *call* yourselves Christians? If you do, what room should there be in *your* hearts for "covetousness, which is idolatry?" Believe it, my beloved brethren, the besetting sin of most of us is that we rely too much upon ourselves, and too little upon God. We cannot see the arm

that helps us, and therefore we vainly think that it is our own. But should it be thus with us? When we know that there is a superintending Providence willing and able to care for us, why should we refuse to cast our care upon Him?

Though you are not to be of the world, you nowhere find it written that you must needs go out of the world before you can serve God. You can find no authority for thinking that God looks with favour upon the prodigal son, or the slothful servant. But this you will find, that "no man can serve two masters," and that you therefore cannot serve both God and Mammon. The inference from which is plain, that you are no longer to "halt between two opinions," but to serve the Lord by making Mammon to serve you, by making your worldly goods, (which is what Mammon means,) subservient, by a proper use of them, to your eternal interests. In short, your care for spiritual things is to be greater than your care for temporal things. Your provision for the souls of those who belong to you is to be beyond all comparison with your provision for their bodies; else, we must fear that your treasure is upon earth, and there we are, in that case, assured will your hearts be also, even "where the rust and moth doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal."

As to precepts, then, forbidding worldliness, the worldly-minded man is clearly without excuse.

But precepts, perhaps, alone might be insufficient to dissuade us from the ardent pursuit of objects so perpetually before us as the things of the world are. Does not then our own experience come in to the assistance of our wavering faith, by confirming all that the Scripture says of the vanity of earthly possessions, and of the folly of him whose chief study is to increase them?

Who is it, for example, that we mourn over as one who has built his house upon the sand, but he whose thirst for riches was never satisfied whilst he lived, and who left them when he died for he knew not whom to gather; the concerns of his soul meanwhile so lost sight of, that had there been indeed no judgment to come after death, his life could scarcely have been more godless than it was? What warrant have the surviving friends of such an one to hope that though lost to them he yet lives to God; that he has passed from pain to enter into joy, his trial ended, and his reward begun?

And which among you is there that has not many times had this wholesome lesson read to him? and how do not all, therefore, stand without excuse if they not only neglect the plain commands of Scripture, but are deaf also to the practical and impressive arguments of the grave?

True enough it is that all, as well as Christians, have had the like experience of the disappointment in which all worldly schemes, pursued too ardently, must inevitably end. But Christians only have had set before them the certain consequences of worldliness hereafter. However it may be with others, thus it is with us:—experience tells *all men* that worldly courses lead to nothing but vexation here; besides this, Scripture expressly assures *us* that they lead to death eternal hereafter. Where then shall *we* find a cloke for our folly and our sin, if we will prefer to the caring for our souls the heaping up of those fancied good things which we not only know of our own selves to be vanity and vexation upon earth, but as to which we have the clearest warning that when the earth shall have passed away, the worm that dieth not, even the remorse of conscience, shall never cease to upbraid us for having too greatly coveted them?

II. The second class of persons we were to refer to in connexion with the text were those who are of the world, because they undervalue their Christian privileges, by which term I would here be understood to mean the usual means of grace open to you all in the public services of our Church.

Now, at the outset, I would impress this upon you, that if a man has been long forgetful of religious duties, and heedless to improve his privileges as a son reconciled to the Father by the sacrifice of CHRIST, nothing but God's Holy Spirit working in him can reinvigorate the spiritual life which since his baptism is "not dead, but sleepeth." But, still, the SPIRIT works by instruments, and those instruments are generally God's Holy Word and Sacraments, and the opportunities of public worship and instruction, which return so regularly in every Christian land. To neglect these, then, is to sin most grievously; it is to provoke the HOLY SPIRIT to leave us to ourselves, and so to bring upon us that destruction which we are so little careful to avert.

Now, let us consider whether by a comparison of the sinfulness of the former world with our own in this respect, we cannot clearly make it out that we are less excusable than they were.

Of all the false religions which have misled mankind, it must of necessity be true, that they who embraced them were walking in the dark. The wisest men amongst the heathen disbelieved in their hearts the existence of those gods whom outwardly they professed to worship: so that it was only where there was ignorance that there could be any thing like faith, whilst good sense was invariably allied to infidelity. What a deplorable state of things was this! and what an excuse is furnished by it for the wickedness of the world in those benighted

ages ! And yet we do not find that there was any lukewarmness manifested by the great mass of the people towards the established worship, such as it was, of their imaginary deities. The cry "O Baal, hear us !" though it came from foolish, yet was it, in some sort, from faithful lips. Again, we find at Ephesus a zeal for "the great goddess Diana," as though she were indeed worthy that "all Asia and the world" should worship her,—as though their temple, like that of Solomon, were the undoubted resting-place of the God of Truth, and not the shrine of a mere wooden image vainly believed to have "fallen down from Jupiter."

But now, take the case of Christians. Can they doubt of the God whom they are called to worship, either that "He is," or that "He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him?" Can they doubt the reasonableness of the service that is enjoined them? Oh ! look once more to the heathen, I mean to the reflecting heathen, and behold him distracting himself with such thoughts as these. "I know that chance alone cannot have so ordered all things aright as to have brought into being this creation which lies before me. For chance, I see, does nothing now ; and why, if she was once so excellent a contriver, should she either lose her skill, or cease to use it? No ; there must be a God—the first cause of all this harmony and order—the artificer and upholder of all this varied mechanism—the giver of life, and every other gift, to every thing that breathes—the creator therefore, of man—his protector and his Lord. Surely, then, for all his goodness this mighty Being deserves some thankfulness from me : surely, by his own He ought to be adored. But how shall I find Him out? and with what worship shall I go before Him? If I pray to Him will He answer me, and how is it that I am to pray?

And then fancy this right-minded but bewildered man looking to the prevailing superstitions of his age, seeking this 'unknown God' in the temple of some idol, and seeing him represented there under the likeness of an image, perishable as the carpenter that made it; worshipped with the senseless ceremonies of man's devising; and addressed with the always unauthorized and often impious prayers of pride or lust, avarice or revenge. Can you not pity the despair in which he would turn back, unable in his heart to say to a stock, "Thou art my father;" and to a stone, "Thou hast brought me forth."

Now think you that if such an one were to receive light from the Father of lights, and the darkness being dispelled which had so long been familiar to him, he were to walk, as you, my brethren, all do, in the broad noon-day of Gospel certainty, O, think you, would he not put your lukewarmness to shame? Would he not by his diligence in seeking the LORD where he might be found,—by his joy that at last he had been visited and blessed,—by his boldness in the service of Him who had thus mercifully revealed Himself,—by his unfeigned faith, his holy hope, his fervent charity towards all his fellow heirs of everlasting life—would he not read even to the sincere and faithful disciple of our days an impressive illustration of such words as these: If CHRIST had not come and spoken unto you ye had not had sin, but now ye have no cloke for your sin?

It is not necessary that, by taking more points of comparison between the different religious advantages and opportunities of the two classes of mankind to which the text draws our attention, I should multiply my words rather than add to my arguments, or to your persuasion of their sufficiency. One only scriptural elucidation of the subject will I add.

The sacred writers, more especially the Prophets of the Old Testament, are often found to speak of the world unenlightened by Christianity under the figure of a dry and barren wilderness; whilst, as opposed to this, under the emblem of a fruitful land—a watered garden—they designate the future kingdom of the Messiah, the countries where the true light was in after-ages to shine. Keep, then, these distinct representations in your view, and you will see that unless our LORD were indeed an austere judge, taking up that which he laid not down, and reaping that which he did not sow, the text embodies the principle on which, in justice, he will reckon with mankind at the last great day.

It were manifestly inconsistent with the equal dealing of the Almighty to demand great fruits of holiness where the seed of a true faith had been scattered either sparingly, or not at all; that without the immediate interference of his own fertilizing power the thirsty wilderness should blossom as the rose. But the converse of this argument is that which applies to us.

If *we* have been (and who can deny it?) so far the objects of his *greater* care, as that from us may fairly be expected an abundant harvest; if in virtue of our having more largely partaken of the means of grace, we are as the vineyard of the LORD “in a very fruitful hill,” which he has fenced and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst of it, and when he looked (as well he might) that it should bring forth grapes,—if we, alas! have only brought forth wild and worthless grapes, how in the judgment of the LORD of the vineyard can we stand? How will it not be less than our ingratitude has deserved if we hear our condemnation still in the indignant language of the Prophet, “I will tell you what I

will do to my vineyard—I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up: and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down, and I will lay it waste. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression: for righteousness, but behold a cry.”

Suffer, brethren, in conclusion, a word of exhortation. Amongst the evils of our times is the neglect of, or indifference to, the public ordinances of religion; and where this is an increasing evil, it is a fearful sign that we are fast going astray from the good old ways in which our fathers walked. As the minister of this parish I own, with thankfulness to Him who alone directs your paths, the general regularity of your attendance, at least once every Sabbath, to the duties of the sanctuary. Would that you could be persuaded, as I trust you one day may, to join all of you in both our services! If the sermon be the sole attraction, and the prayers be little thought of, I cannot but fear that what should be the first object of coming to church is by you considered the second—that you had rather hear the word enlarged upon by the preacher, than that precious word itself read to you out of the Bible,—rather hear than pray,—rather hear from us the value of prayer and the promises God has made to it, than feel by your own experience how faithfully and entirely these promises are fulfilled. I do not forget the many causes, all of them occasionally sufficient, which may hinder even the best of us from coming up in this respect to the full measure of our duty; but I also know how much management and contrivance will effect, even when contending with the greatest difficulties.

But should any now chance to hear me who but seldom frequent the courts of the LORD’S house, to them

I would say, O that they would bethink themselves how unseemly a thing it is to be daily loaded with benefits, and never to return thanks! and if that saying of the Psalmist be true that, "praise is comely," how uncomely in the sight of GOD must be their sullen refusal to join in it! It is scarcely to be hoped, but still it is just possible, that he who is habitually absent from public worship may yet so far retain a sense of what used to be, in his better days, his employment on the Sabbath, as not grievously, in other respects, to misuse or profane it. But I ask, whether even this can be hoped of those who are to come after him? Religion, like all other things, if never before the eyes, will soon be out of the heart; and if you treat it with indifference, your children will learn to treat it with levity and contempt; and it will be well, if once entered on, the easy, the enticing, the downward path of moral degradation, their progress is stayed ere they plunge into the dark gulf of hardened infidelity. This is a consideration that generally has weight even with the worst of parents, for such is the natural self-distrust of error, that, however careless a man may be as regards himself, there are but few who would not wish their children to be religious.

All I add is my earnest prayer, that He who only can "turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," may so grant an entrance for these reflections into the minds of all to whom they apply, as to lead them in time to the practice of this plainest duty—the duly valuing the abundant means of grace vouchsafed to them—a duty which they owe to Him, to their country, to their families, and to themselves.

THE NIGHT COMETH.

BY

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ST. JOHN IX. 4.

*I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day;
the night cometh when no man can work.*

AMONG the evils which resulted from the fall of man from the state of purity in which he was originally created, the darkness which overspread his mental faculties, and his consequent ignorance respecting spiritual things, were not the least. Hence mankind stood in need, not only of a Saviour who might make satisfaction to GOD for the breach of His law, but also of a *prophet* who could remove those errors and delusions with regard to religion and morality, with which the minds of men had become possessed, and afford them such instruction as might enable them to understand how they ought to walk and to please GOD. When, therefore, JESUS came to destroy the works of the devil, He took upon Himself the office of a teacher of mankind, and proved his authority for the doctrines which He delivered, by works far exceeding the reach of human power.

The words of the text form part of the conversation which our Lord held with his disciples, respecting the miracle of mercy He was about to perform, in giving the blessing of sight to one who had been blind from his birth. In these words He gives the reason of his increasing diligence in the fulfilment of those gracious

purposes which He was to accomplish during his abode upon earth, in language strongly expressive of the deep humiliation to which He submitted for the sake of sinful man. God by nature, and surrounded from everlasting with all the glories of divinity, He yet condescended to take upon Him the form of a servant, and to submit Himself with the most perfect meekness and resignation to the will of his Heavenly Father,—“I must *work the works of Him that sent me.*” Having undertaken to become the Redeemer of mankind, He laid aside all that majesty and power which of right belonged to Him, and acknowledged Himself bound to undergo all the toil and labour which it was necessary for Him to encounter, before He should have completed the work that had been given Him to do.

To administer comfort to the afflicted, to give rest to the heavy laden, to succour the diseased, to instruct the poor, to guide the steps of the humble sinner into the way of peace,—these and other similar works of power and of goodness might seem to be his *own* works, and might reasonably be attributed to his merciful disposition and his divine perfections; but He chose rather to describe them as “the works of Him that sent Him;” and what He here says of his *works*, He elsewhere says of the *doctrines* which He preached;—“My doctrine is *not mine*, but *His that sent me.*” And this He spoke of Himself, not in regard of his *divine* nature, but with respect to the *prophetical* office which He had assumed, and which required that He should not seek his *own* glory, or advance doctrines of his own invention, but that He should speak and act as one having a commission from God, to make known his will to mankind. The time allotted for the fulfilment of his office as a teacher sent from on high was of no great length, and a considerable portion of it had already elapsed; and He accordingly intimates the neces-

sity of entirely devoting the remainder of his residence upon earth to the prosecution of those works which were to be completed before He was to become a sacrifice for sin, and to give his life a ransom for many; "I must work the works of Him that sent me *while it is day*: the night cometh when no man can work."

The night of which JESUS here speaks has come and gone; the work which his Father had given Him to do is finished; the atonement has been made, and the kingdom of heaven has been opened to all believers, in whose behalf He now appears at the right hand of GOD as their Redeemer and Intercessor. But although his earthly labours in the promotion of the work of our salvation are no longer necessary, there is still much to be done before we can become possessed of the inheritance which He has so dearly purchased for us; we have a great and important work to do in this world, for the conditions of faith and repentance remain to be fulfilled before any benefit can be derived from the satisfaction made by CHRIST to GOD on behalf of sinners. We have a severe contest to carry on with the whole body of sin and corruption, and many evil passions and appetites to mortify and subdue; nor is it only by our own corrupt natures that we are opposed in our Christian warfare; "We wrestle not against flesh and blood alone, but against *principalities*, against *powers*, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against *spiritual wickedness* in high places." We have machinations to guard against, and assaults to overcome, from enemies who are described to us as deceitful and malicious by nature, and formidable from their numbers and power; who are represented as holding their empire in those places of the world where the darkness has not yet been dispelled by the Sun of Righteousness: and who are fur-

thermore of an immortal and "spiritual" nature; so that whilst the attack is increasing, the assailant himself is unseen, and perhaps wholly forgotten by those whose *communion with God he would obstruct*, and whose souls he would deface with wickedness, and render for ever unfit for the inheritance of the saints in light.

That we may be able to stand against the wiles of these enemies, we are required to "put on the whole armour of God," and to avail ourselves of every means of defence and assistance with which He has provided us: "Praying always with *all prayer* and supplication in the spirit, and *watching thereunto with all perseverance.*"

Now from all this we see how arduous is that portion of "the work" to be performed on earth, which relates to the mortification of our sinful passions, and how much anxious care and diligence is required of all who would complete it. It is not enough to be favourably disposed towards holiness, or to take some few steps in the way of salvation; for all this will be in vain, if the desire be cold, the resolution unsteady, and the endeavour feeble. We must zealously and earnestly "*strive* to enter in at the strait gate," for "many will *seek* to enter in, and shall not be able."

The resistance which we are called upon to offer to the temptations of the flesh and the devil, is only one part of the work which we have to do. The Christian religion does not consist entirely of *negative* precepts; it requires us not only, as far as possible, to "cease to do evil," but also to "learn to do well;" and we must look upon our work as still to be done, until the heart is sanctified, and replenished with those graces and virtues which are the fruits of God's Holy Spirit. It is indeed a great thing to receive the "precious promises of God," and to "escape the corruption that is in the world

through lust." But we are exhorted, "Besides this, to give all diligence, and to add to our faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, *temperance*; and to temperance, *patience*; and to patience, *godliness*; and to godliness, *brotherly kindness*; and to brotherly kindness, *charity*."

To become possessed of all these graces, embracing as they do, unfeigned devotion in the service of God, a careful study of his laws, and humble submission to every thing which we may be called upon to endure for his sake, together with an affectionate and kind disposition towards all our Christian brethren, and the most extensive charity and good will towards all mankind; to become possessed of all these graces, so as to manifest them in every action of our lives, cannot be regarded as a work to be carelessly undertaken, or easily accomplished. And yet so necessary is this work, and so incumbent upon all who would be saved through faith in CHRIST, that the apostle adds:—"He that lacketh these things is *blind*, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." He is "blind" to his own state, for he looks upon his work as done, when a most important part of it is scarcely commenced; he is "blind" to holy and heavenly things; his affections being so much occupied with the affairs of this present life, that "he cannot see afar off." He is "blind" to the nature of that profession into which he entered, when, in the rite of baptism, the 'promises of forgiveness of sin were visibly signed and sealed;' for "he hath forgotten that" when "he was purged from his old sins," he was laid under the obligations to holiness of heart and life.

We see then that the work which we have to perform in this world is one of considerable difficulty, and one for the completion of which the longest life, and the most

indefatigable exertions, are scarcely adequate. And is this a work to be postponed from day to day, and deferred to a period when the energies of mind and body are impaired by disease or infirmity? Surely not. Where so much is to be accomplished, the work must be undertaken and advanced "*while it is day.*" None of us can tell what the duration of our lives may be; but whether they be long or short—whether it is the purpose of God that our sun should go down in the morning, or at mid-day, or in the evening, He who has given us a work to do, will give us time for the performance of it. But if our years be mis-spent, our talents misapplied, and the opportunities of advancing in holiness, and giving unto God the honour due to his name, be neglected, we cannot promise ourselves either the extension of our time, or a recurrence of those opportunities of working out our salvation which have hitherto been bestowed upon us in vain. "*Are there not twelve hours in the day?*" was our Saviour's question to his disciples, when they would have dissuaded Him from encountering the danger of another journey into Judea. "The day" of every man's life will be of sufficient length to enable him to finish the work which has been given him to do; but then no portion of his time must be trifled away. Our day will have its twelve hours, but every stage of life brings with it some duty to be done; the work of one hour must not be left to be done in another, far less must the labour of a whole day be delayed until the eleventh hour has passed away.

When the day of life has reached its close, the time of labour will be at an end, and our work, if unfinished then, must continue unfinished for ever!—" *The night cometh, when no man can work.*"

This life is the appointed season of probation, and there is no work, nor device, nor "knowledge, nor

wisdom, in the grave, whither we are going," and which will become our dwelling-place, how soon we know not. In the natural day, the course of the sun may be traced, and the period at which its light will be withdrawn may be foreseen, so as to enable us to prepare for its departure, and to provide against the darkness; and this may be the case with our lives, but we know that it is not always thus; nor are we in any degree certain that the short warning of a twilight will be given between the bright noonday of youth and the gloom of the grave. We may be yet in the morning of life, and a healthy and vigorous frame of body may hold out a reasonable expectation of a long continuance upon earth, and the cares of religion, and thoughts of another world, may be left for some of those future years which we readily promise ourselves, and all around us may be full of light and life, and animation, and hope! But even then the long dark night of death may close in upon us suddenly and unexpectedly; and the first serious thoughts of commencing the work which has been given us to perform on earth, may be excited by the fearful summons to meet our God in judgment.

Surely, then, it is incumbent upon all of us, let the period of life at which we have arrived be what it may, to remember the caution of our Saviour, that "the night cometh, when no man can work," and to exert our utmost powers to work the works of Him that sent us "*while it is day.*" "Yet a little while is the light with you: walk in holiness while ye have light, lest darkness come upon you." The light of life is with you "yet a little while," and you must employ it as those who will be held accountable for every hour;—the light of the gospel shines upon you but a "little while," and delay may forfeit the redemption which it sets forth;—the light of "grace" is

continued “yet a *little* while,” for if it be long resisted, it may be withdrawn;—the light of God’s countenance is lifted up in mercy “yet a *little while*,” for if his goodness is set at nought and despised, you can have nothing to look forward to but the consequences of his strict and eternal justice!

Let not your hopes of everlasting happiness be suffered to rest on so weak and uncertain a foundation as the resolution of devoting yourself to the service of God at a future and distant day, but thankfully avail yourself of the present hour, which is all that you can safely depend upon—and “give glory to the LORD your GOD, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death.”

Happy will your end be, if, when the sun of this life is about to go down for ever, the recollection of each hour of the day should bring with it the remembrance of time, and talent, and opportunities devoted to the service of God, and employed in the prosecution of the work of a disciple of CHRIST! Happy will you be, if, when the eye grows dim, and the brightest objects of this world’s enjoyment have no longer any charm, you can indulge a well-grounded hope, that through the merits of your Redeemer, your part and your lot may be placed in that heavenly city, which “has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb will be the light thereof.”

THE YOUNG MAN'S DUTY.

BY THE

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ECCLESIASTES XI. 9.

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment.

IT would be well, if that age which most needs counsel and direction, were disposed to follow the advice of the more experienced, when offered. But, alas! those who require the strictest control, are generally the most impatient of control, and those who ought to be guided by wiser heads than their own, are seldom inclined to submit to such guidance. Youth is headstrong, as well as thoughtless, and will follow its own imaginations in spite of all remonstrance. Much, however, may still be done to check the sallies of youth by early discipline, and accustoming the youthful mind to exercises of self-control, as also by timely and well-adapted instruction. It becomes, therefore, an important duty of parents, and of those intrusted with the education of the young, to inure them early to habits of regularity and virtue, and to imbue their minds with the principles of true religion, that so they may enable them to pass through the temptations of the world unhurt, and arm them for the warfare which as Christians they will have to wage. And

as the young bear some proportion in every Christian audience, and in this present assembly a large one, I trust I shall be fulfilling my duty by addressing this discourse to them; and I earnestly beseech their attention, while I point out to them the sins to which they are most liable, and their evil consequences, that by thus warning them of the dangers which beset their course, I may if possible, by the grace of God, deter them from evil, and invite them to what is good.

1. Let me first warn the young against sensual pleasures. To keep the body in temperance, soberness, and chastity, is the duty of all ages, but such virtues must be cultivated in youth if we would retain them in after years. A dissolute young man seldom becomes steady and chaste as he advances in age. Remember, my young friends, to whom you have devoted yourselves. You have engaged in your baptism to renounce the lusts of the flesh, and to serve God. Your bodies, as the Apostle declares, are the temple of the HOLY GHOST, who dwelleth in you. To defile the temple of God is a grievous sin, and will bring upon you destruction. God will withdraw his Spirit from such as thus grieve Him, and then they must become a prey to Satan. What if the world allow and commend such unhallowed practices; what if wicked companions entice and encourage you? GOD is your master, and not the world; God, too, is your judge, and the smiles of the world, and the cheerings of associates, will avail nothing to clear you from the guilt of sin, or to soften the sentence which shall be pronounced against it. Therefore, flee youthful lusts, and mortify your earthly members, and be holy, even as God is holy.

2. Swearing and loose conversation are sins to which the young are exposed; they account it manly to give the reins to their tongue, and oaths and filthiness are the

result of such an opinion. But he that values the favour of God will guard the door of his lips; he will do more, he will watch the recesses of his heart, that no evil desire within prompt him to speak what is displeasing to God. For nothing is clearer than that God will not hold those guiltless, who dishonour his holy name by rash oaths and curses. And the Apostle, after speaking of filthy communication, declares that, because of these things, the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience. Indeed, how does such language become the redeemed of the LORD, those whose business on earth is to purify themselves, even as He is pure? Therefore, my friends, keep your tongue from evil, and your lips, that they speak no guile. Profane discourse is an open defiance of the dread majesty of God, and indecency is a thing not to be named among Christians. Whatever the world may say, there is neither wit nor pleasantry in such discourse; it is the abhorrence of good men, and God will bring it into judgment.

3. My next caution is against indulgence in frivolous pleasures. The spirits of the young are generally gay and buoyant, and are apt to hurry them after every vain amusement that presents itself to their notice. The world and its attractions are all new to them, and there is a charm in mere novelty sufficiently strong to captivate the inexperienced. Let me, therefore, remind my young hearers, that pleasures of this nature, even though innocent in themselves, ought not to be the occupation of their life, but only a relaxation from labour or study, or close application to the business of their calling. When the mind is absorbed in such amusements, either in calling back the remembrance of what is gone, or in preparing for the future, the weightier concerns that belong to us will necessarily be forgotten and laid aside,

and our souls, instead of being prepared for immortality, will be found grovelling about earthly things, and of earthly things the most trifling and insignificant. This is to be indeed unprofitable; and when God brings us into judgment, what can we expect as the end of such thoughtlessness, but to lose that happiness after which we have never aspired? Such is the danger of being lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.

4. Misemployment of time is a sin to which the young are especially liable. When removed from the restraint of school, or the control of parents, they account it a chief source of happiness to be idle and do nothing. Now, idleness is sure to lead to sin; in the poor it is the parent of thieving, in the rich, of profligacy. If not well employed, we shall be ill employed. The result is, that when God demands an account of our time, which is a valuable talent bestowed upon us for the most important purpose, we shall be found to have wasted our LORD's goods, and abused them to our own destruction. Let me, therefore, most earnestly recommend to the young to cultivate a habit of industry, as not only qualifying them to go honourably and usefully through life, but as preserving them from many snares, and fulfilling the ordinance of God, who has appointed us labour. And if any, by their plentiful circumstances, are exempted from the necessity of working for their bread, they are not thereby exempted from making a good and religious use of their time. Having more leisure to serve God, they must devote more time to his service, and account those hours as best employed, which are spent in promoting the glory of God and their own salvation.

5. And as the young are tempted to misemploy their time, so also their money. Perhaps they have not much at their disposal, but whatever they have to spare, God

requires a portion of it. Opportunities of almsgiving are never wanting; and we cannot begin too early to counteract the disposition to turn everything we possess to our own gratification.

6. Neglect of God and of their duty to Him, is another sin into which young persons are very generally betrayed. The world lays so strong a hold on them, that they have no relish for spiritual exercises. They regard religion as well enough for maturer age. At present they would eat, drink, and be merry, and take their fill of the pleasures and pastimes of life; and thus they increase that distaste for religious employments, which is part of our fallen nature. And while the passions are impetuous, as those of youth are, such will be invariably the case, unless they exert a vigilance proportionable to the danger. But the evil does not rest here. Habits of irreligion, once formed, are seldom eradicated; worldly-mindedness clings to them through life, and if, for the sake of decency or custom, they frequent the ordinances of religion in after life, they will find that they have no savour for the things of God. And if death surprise them in this state, what a fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation awaits them! Let me, therefore, warn the young against the danger of forgetting God, or neglecting the means of grace and spiritual improvement which He has placed within their reach. Let me warn them against loving the world, which will draw them from God;—for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

7. I shall advert to one other sin, which is found more particularly in young persons;—it is that false shame, which leads them frequently to partake of sinful practices which their hearts condemn, but of which they dare not avow their dislike. They that will live godly in CHRIST

JESUS, must now, as in the Apostles' days, suffer persecution; they must be content to be evil spoken of for the sake of CHRIST. But the fear of ridicule and derision operates often too powerfully on the minds of young persons who are well disposed, and they become ashamed of CHRIST and his cross, when their good principles are attacked. But this ought not to be so. There is no occasion for them to obtrude their own opinions upon others; but when they are invited to wickedness by evil companions, who would laugh them out of their religious seriousness, let nothing on earth induce them to deny CHRIST, and comply with what they know to be wrong. Such a false shame will open the door to a ready participation in guilty courses. Examples are not wanting where persons, who have at length been jeered out of their virtue, have thenceforward run foremost in the career of vice, as if anxious to prove, by their subsequent profligacy, the erroneousness of their former conduct. But how awful are the words of our Saviour addressed to such! "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this sinful and adulterous generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Let this sentence of Scripture be imprinted deeply in the minds of those who are tempted by the scoffs of libertine companions to forsake the path of virtue.

Thus I have instanced those sins to which youth is especially liable, and have shown their dangerous consequences. Even in this life vicious habits will be followed by the upbraidings of conscience, and fearful forebodings of the future, though life pass ever so smoothly. And a day of reckoning will come, when those who have walked in the ways of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes, shall be judged by GOD in righteousness. How, then,

does it behove the young to remove the cause of sorrow from their heart, as the Preacher counsels, and to put away evil from their flesh ! While the heart is pure, and as yet uncontaminated by the commerce of the world, and by indulgence in sin, it is then an acceptable offering to God. To have feared God from their youth is the character of the most eminent saints of God ; and be assured, that early piety and dedication of yourselves to Him, will ensure to you a far more glorious reward than will be bestowed upon those who have entered late into His service. The prodigal son shall indeed be welcomed when he returns to his father's house, but he shall not be made equal with him who has never deserted his father. In the words, then, of the Preacher, which follow the text, I exhort you to remember your Creator in the days of your youth ; and to assist you in your religious course, I would offer to you some rules for your conduct.

1. The first which I shall recommend is the use of daily prayer. If this intercourse with God be even remitted for a while, or negligently performed, it is astonishing how soon we lapse into worldly-mindedness and sin. For not only is prayer necessary in order to obtain that spiritual aid, without which we cannot stand upright, but it conduces much to keep us watchful over ourselves, and conscious of God's all-seeing eye, and thus preserves from many dangers to which we are unavoidably exposed. Prayer should at least be a morning and evening sacrifice ; but those, who are used to pray fervently at these times, will seize many occasions through the day of pouring out their heart's desire before God, and offering to Him the sacrifice of their lips. Of the comfort, as well as the utility of prayer, who can doubt ? To go forth to the business of the day with a consciousness of God's gracious and fatherly protection

being extended over you, how full of encouragement and delight is it! And when you lie down to rest with the peace of GOD shed abroad in your hearts, all earthly satisfactions are as nothing, compared with that tranquil frame of soul which results from this sacred communion with GOD.

2. To prayer, add the study of GOD's Word, and the reading of good books. These are the spiritual food, which are to sustain the life of your soul. The acquaintance with GOD, which you will derive from the perusal of your Bible, will excite in you a deep reverence of his majesty, and a filial love of his goodness. It is impossible to study the sacred volume with the desire of knowledge and improvement without being the better for it. Other pious writings have the same tendency, though in a lower degree; they feed the flame of religion within us, and preserve the mind from the incursion of less useful thoughts. Besides, we are assured that the grace of GOD will especially accompany those who search the Scriptures, that they may become wise unto salvation. Let, therefore, your delight be in the law of the LORD, and meditate therein day and night.

3. Regular attendance on the public ordinances of the Church is another means of keeping yourselves unspotted from the world. Let the Sabbath day be strictly a day of rest to you: hallow it, as GOD's holy day, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure. It is notorious, that the breach of the Sabbath leads the way to the commission of every crime even of enormity. And the reason is obvious: they who cease to worship GOD according to his appointment, soon cease to worship Him at all. They withdraw themselves from his authority, and give the reins to their own lusts and appetites. If these do not plunge them into

crimes against society, from which education and custom, and a regard for their character may preserve them, they certainly detach them from GOD, and enslave them to the world. The end is, that having forsaken GOD, and lived according to their own pleasure, GOD will reject them when He comes to judgment. And as the religious observance of the Sabbath tends greatly to uphold the Christian life, so especially does the frequent use of the Lord's Supper. The soul of the communicant is in that ordinance strengthened and refreshed, drawn into closer union with CHRIST, and fortified against the assaults of sin and the devil. Thus will a due fulfilment of religious services quicken your faith, and love, and all your Christian graces, and enable you to pursue the business of your calling unhurt by the temptations that surround your path.

4. To these rules for spiritual exercises some others may be added, of great importance to your welfare. Shun the company of wicked persons. Example is at all ages infectious; among young people especially so. As therefore you value salvation, keep aloof from bad society. Among those, with whom you are unavoidably thrown, will be some better than the rest; and though they may not be entirely what they ought to be, yet if they do not tempt you to ill, your example and counsel may encourage them in good, and promote their spiritual advancement. Choose these, therefore, for your companions, and mix as little with others as your station and calling will admit: for the frequent sight of what is evil gradually weakens our abhorrence of it, and he, that would be pure from sin, must avoid all contact with it. This caution respecting bad company may be extended also to vain amusements, which, to say the least, break in upon that solemnity of mind which is a part of the

Christian's character, and unfit those who pursue them for the calm exercises of religion : but not only this, they too often ensnare the soul, and tempt it to evil; they kindle bad passions, which otherwise might never have been awakened. Beware, therefore, of being entangled in such vain pleasures, and let your recreations be innocent and moderate, that you may return from them to your duty refreshed and not bewildered.

5. It is good for you to apply your mind diligently to the business of your calling, whatever it be. As idleness introduces vice of every description, so employment preserves innocence. Always therefore be occupied, that there may be no room for wicked thoughts, no leisure for wicked devices.

6. Accustom yourselves also to doing good actions. It is a mistake to think that you are too young to begin to do good. You may have opportunities of alms-giving, of healing quarrels, of kind and friendly offices to those about you; and these are not to be neglected. It is important to your future progress in righteousness to form early habits of goodness, and to be inured from your youth up to consider it your duty to do all the good you can.

If you take up these resolutions of serving God to the best of your ability, you must expect to meet with the scorn and sneers of the world. But fight manfully the good fight of faith, and God will support you under it. He will cheer you in your course with the comforts of his Spirit; the light of his countenance shall brighten your path, and your reward shall be great in heaven.

THE NEGLECTED SUMMER, A FIT EMBLEM OF A CARELESS AND UNGODLY LIFE.

BY THE

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JEREMIAH VIII. 20.

*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are
not saved.*

THE prophet, in the chapter from whence these words are taken, upbraids his countrymen for their impenitence and want of religion, declares in strong and energetic language that God would punish their offences, and then shows them that though He is gracious and long-suffering, He will not suffer the best of their days to be past in sin, nor reward them with eternal happiness if they forget Him in the summer of life. In their prosperity, they were often unmindful of his mercies, and for their impiety, and want of true genuine holiness, it was, that God cast them out of his favoured land, and suffered them to become a by-word and a reproach among the heathen. Although blest with the law, and favoured by the prophets with continual communications from God himself,—though enjoying in the promised land all that their hearts could wish, or nature bestow, still they were unthankful to their heavenly benefactor, and repaid with ingratitude the distinguished mercies which He had so bountifully showered down upon them. Even in their affliction and distress, God did not leave himself without witnesses among them; He communicated his

will by the prophets, and threatened them with punishment if they refused to hear them. But how often were these heavenly admonitions slighted! How often were the prophets held in derision, and the sinful courses upon which they had entered persevered in, although they knew that for all these things God would bring them into judgment! The truth is, they copied the bad example of the surrounding nations, who were addicted to idolatry, and every vicious propensity, and instead of consulting their duty, sought only the gratification of their unholy desires. Wickedness abounded amongst them; bad examples were multiplied to an amazing extent; impiety and ungodliness prevailed; and the house which was destined by JEHOVAH to be the glory of all nations, became (to use the expressive language of Scripture) "a den of thieves." It is no wonder, then, that God in his displeasure should cast them away,—no wonder that He should permit them to suffer distress, when they rejected Him, and cast his words behind their back. It seems almost beyond the power of belief, that any nation could so far forget their duty and their own eternal welfare, as to act in direct opposition to God's commands; yet such was positively the fact, that with a complete knowledge of the will of the Most High, they acted contrary to that knowledge, "and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for evermore." They shaped their mode of life according to their earthly desires, and placed their chief happiness in the enjoyments of time and sense. Instead of preparing for a future state of existence, they prepared only for the present, and suffered the summer of life, and the harvest, which should have produced the fruits of religion, to pass away unimproved, and their eternal salvation to remain insecure.

The besetting sin amongst the Jews is also prevalent in this our day,—I mean, forgetfulness of God. My brethren, we profess to be Christians, to be the followers of the blessed JESUS; but how many amongst us are there, who, if called upon “to give a reason of the hope that is in them,” would find that their religion consisted only in profession! How many, who bare the badge of the Saviour’s name, and who promised, when they were admitted into covenant with Him, to depart from iniquity, still continue in their sins—prefer this world to the next—time to eternity—the fleeting things of this earth to the lasting joys of heaven! Though from their earliest years the great truths of Christianity have been set before them by the ministers of CHRIST with the greatest care—though they have been taught to read the book of GOD, and to meditate on his providence—though numberless examples of piety and godliness surround them on every side among their friends and acquaintances—still their wicked hearts remain untouched with remorse for their sins, and they live as if they never thought of God, and cared little or nothing about their eternal welfare. The present life is everything with them—eternity nothing; worldly enjoyments and worldly pleasures draw their minds from high and heavenly things to grovel upon the earth on which they move, and on which they place all their desires, while death and the awful judgment scarcely occupy one moment of their time, or give them the least anxiety and solicitude. What an awful infatuation is this! That any in our day should be found, blessed as they are, with the bountiful means of grace for securing their salvation, “naming the name of CHRIST”—professing themselves to be his followers, and yet “not departing from iniquity!” How can they reconcile their conduct

with any principle of duty to the Supreme Being, or to themselves! How can they live in direct opposition—nay, in open violation of his laws, when they know from Scripture that God spared not his own Son for the wickedness of men, but gave Him up to suffer a cruel and ignominious death! We have too much cause, I fear, to apply to many in this Christian land the striking words of the prophet, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”

We propose to consider these words in the order in which they stand, and may the blessed SPIRIT of God assist our endeavours, and be present with us in our meditation upon them, that our souls may be roused to activity and diligence, and that we may not, when death shall put a period to our existence, “fall short of the prize of our high calling.”

First, then, the harvest is past.

By the term harvest, we are to understand that portion of time when we might reasonably expect the fruits of righteousness to have arrived at maturity, and when those seeds of holiness and virtue which have been sown in our early years might have produced abundant increase. The Christian is required to be faithful, and if he neglect to improve the talent committed to his care, or keep it “bound up in a napkin,” the Lord of the harvest will come in an hour when he thinks not, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. Wherever the seed of the Word has been sown, whatever heart has received JESUS CHRIST as a crucified Saviour, whatever tongue has confessed his name, there the fruits of righteousness are expected in their due time. No doubt many, perhaps all of us, can call to recollection, the earnestness and attention with which our parents and friends endeavoured to instil into our youthful

minds, in early life, the seeds of virtue and religion, the blessed precepts of the Gospel, and the great rewards promised by God to a life spent in piety and holiness;—no doubt we have been warned from time to time of the deceitfulness of sin, and the depravity of the human heart, by the faithful ministers of CHRIST;—no doubt we have every one of us experienced innumerable blessings from Him “from whom every good and precious gift cometh;” now, I would ask, have all these benefits which religious education, religious exhortation, and heavenly kindness have procured, produced in us corresponding gratitude?

Have we been brought to feel “that there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we can be saved, but only the name of our Lord JESUS CHRIST?” Have our hearts been humbled, and has the pride of our nature been subdued; have we been brought to the foot of the cross to confess ourselves miserable sinners, without hope, without consolation, except in and through the mercy of our Redeemer? Have our minds been more fixed on heaven, and have we learnt “to set our affections more on the things above than those which are on the earth?” Have we used this world as not abusing it, considering ourselves only as strangers and pilgrims on earth,—seeking another and a better country, that is, a heavenly one? Have we been instant in prayer, and anxious through God’s grace to accomplish the work which He has given us to do, not walking in the by-roads and devious paths of sin, but as humble disciples of the Lamb of God, “who died to take away the sins of the world?” Have we endeavoured “to put away the old man with his deeds,” that is, the passions and desires of a corrupt nature, “and to put on the new man,” that is, the graces and ornaments of the Christian character,

“which after GOD is created in righteousness and true holiness?” If we have not, my brethren, our hearts have been unproductive of religious fruits, our lives have been a scandal to the Christian name, we have crucified the Saviour afresh, and put Him to an open shame,—and the Lord of the Harvest will find us barren and unfruitful, without any saving faith, any well-grounded hope of eternal happiness, or any interest in the great salvation.

The young have a very important part to act; they are taught “to remember their Creator in the days of their youth,” and to shun the ways of sin,—yet how many, beguiled by the ensnaring charms of pleasure, falsely so called, and urged on by impetuosity and warmth of youth, sin with the conviction that they are doing wrong, and forget that they have, one day, an important account to give before Him, “to whom all hearts are open, and every desire known!” Look around you, my brethren, and see the numbers in every Christian congregation, amongst the young, who notoriously offend against God, and who instead of cherishing the seeds of religion which have been sown in their hearts, and which if fostered by earnest prayer, and watered by Divine grace, would have produced abundant increase in the time of harvest, endeavour to eradicate them, and to smother the voice of conscience, that they may follow their guilty pleasures without shame or remorse. Few, if any, who have once trod in the paths of sin, feel an inclination to retrace their steps, retrieve their character, or alter their course of life, unless roused to a sense of their duty, by some heavy calamity, some heart-searching admonition, or some striking and powerful sermon. But pause, my young friends, before you proceed too far in the way of sin to return, and consider seriously what will be the end

of the course which you are pursuing,—for, be assured, “that the wages of sin is death.” You may, perhaps, be induced to reason in this manner:—We are young, we see no reason why we may not indulge in pleasure in the early part of life, and seek the gratification of our wishes and desires,—it will be time enough to become religious, and to mind the care of the soul, when our declining years warn us to bid adieu to this world’s pursuits, and prepare for another. We shall be better qualified for receiving serious impressions when the fervour of youth has subsided, and time’s unsparing hand reminds us that our abode in this life cannot be long. But how false is this reasoning! The youthful sinner, if permitted to see length of days, will become the aged impenitent;—he will find himself more incapable of returning to God, from the hold which long-continued habits of sin have taken upon his heart than when he first turned aside from the paths of righteousness; and should he ultimately succeed, how many a bitter pang will it give him, to look back upon a life mispent, and see how the best of his days, which ought to have been devoted to God, have been devoted to the world, and to transitory enjoyments. Though God may be gracious to him, for the sake of his Redeemer, he will perceive that he deserves his wrath,—though his repentance be the genuine feelings of an afflicted conscience, yet he abhors himself in dust and ashes, and cries earnestly, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Many among you, who are now in the enjoyment of health, and in the eager pursuit of the follies and vices of a transitory world, who scarcely bestow a single thought on eternity, may never be permitted to see length of days, but may find an early grave with all your sins upon your heads, without faith, without repentance, without any hope of pardon and forgiveness. How, then,

does it behove you to spend your summer of life in such a manner as may render the harvest productive, blessed with an abundant increase of religious fruits, and prepared for the garner of the Heavenly Husbandman! Let none of you, then, who in youth forsake GOD, presume upon a long life,—death may surprise you before you are aware,—eternity, the awful eternity, may swiftly come upon you with all its terrors; therefore labour earnestly “whilst it is called to-day, lest the night should come upon you when no man can work.”

And you, my aged hearers, whose grey hairs remind you of the near approach of death, review your past lives, and see whether you have brought forth the fruits of holiness in their due time, or whether the harvest is past, and you have not laboured to secure your eternal salvation. Yours is an awful period: you stand on the verge of eternity,—there is but one step between you and the grave. Not a moment is to be lost to secure your salvation, for time past cannot be recalled, and a great work is to be accomplished in the small period which remains, if you would die at peace with GOD, and in the hope of a joyful resurrection. Days and years of the best of your lives you have wasted in the pleasures of sin, and banished from your minds the certainty of a hereafter,—you have lived as though this world were to continue for ever, and you had no interest in another and a better,—you have marred the fairest works of GOD’s creation, crucified your Saviour afresh, and have nearly destroyed your eternal prospects. But though the harvest of life be past with you,—though “you have erred and strayed from GOD’s ways like lost sheep,” remember that you have a gracious Saviour who has declared, that “whoever cometh to Him, He will in nowise cast out.” “Come unto me,” says He, “all ye that labour and are heavy

laden, and I will give you rest,—for my yoke is easy, and my burden light.” He calls labourers into his vineyard, even at the eleventh hour, and, therefore, He invites you to come to Him, and be saved. Search, therefore, diligently your own hearts, and see in what you have acted contrary to GOD’S laws, and endeavour, by the assistance of his HOLY SPIRIT, to correct it,—for be assured, that “whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” Repent earnestly of your past sins, and pray that your Heavenly Father would give you a new heart, and renew a right spirit within you,—that He would revive and quicken that cold, lifeless, lukewarm feeling of religion which you have too long possessed, that in your declining years you may experience the comforts of an approving conscience, and “perfect holiness in the fear of GOD.” Pray that He may give you a double portion of his Spirit, that you may make some atonement for the deficiencies of your past lives, and “may attain the end of your faith in CHRIST JESUS—the salvation of your souls.”

Secondly, “The summer is ended.”

As the summer is the most important season of the year, for then the earth yields her increase, and pours forth her choicest fruits; so youth is the most desirable time for acquiring religious knowledge, and bringing to perfection all the fruits of righteousness. It is then that our hearts are most susceptible of serious impressions—it is then that health and strength suffer the mind unmolested to attend “to the one thing needful,”—it is then that the heart expands with the fervours of devotion, and the soul, wrapt in devout contemplation, carries its views to unseen worlds, and contemplates, with an

eye of faith, the glories of EMMANUEL'S kingdom, and the blissful joys which "the eye of man hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into his heart to conceive." A man who is truly alive to his spiritual interest will acknowledge, with gratitude to Him "before whom all hearts be open," that the lessons of piety instilled into his mind in early life, are the best preservatives against the allurements of sin, and the vanities of the world; he will see "that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom," and that he who has been taught "to remember his Creator in the days of his youth," will be much better fortified to combat with the trials and temptations of life, than one whose early days have been spent in sin, and whose heart and affections are not brought into subjection to the will of God.

It should be, my brethren, our constant care, not to suffer our summer of life to pass away, without having made some progress in religious knowledge,—some advancement in the divine life,—some solid improvement in faith and practice, so that as we advance in years we may increase in holiness, and the nearer we come to our latter end, the better we may be prepared to meet our Judge. Let us not put off, as a great many are apt to do, the convenient time, framing excuses, and forming resolutions of living better for the future, for that convenient time to which we look, may never arrive,—that season for repentance and amendment, which we have only in prospect, may never come; "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." If we neglect the means of grace, which JESUS CHRIST died to procure,—if we live regardless of prayer,—indifferent to our eternal welfare,—inattentive to the reading of the Bible,—remiss and careless in the observance of the Sabbath,—and negligent in our private devotions, we may, like the Jews

of old, whom the prophet Jeremiah addressed so pathetically, end our summer of life under God's displeasure, unfruitful in every good word and work, and with them, suffer the reward of our folly, in the regions of darkness and despair.

Daily observation, as well as the voice of revelation, must convince us that our time here is short, and that this world was never intended for our final habitation. It has but few things to offer worthy of our regard, if we properly estimated the end of our being, and learnt to compare things temporal with those which are eternal. Why, then, do any of us think so much of the present life, and so little of the next? Why do we spend our time and our talents in that which can profit us little or nothing, and keep out of sight the necessary concerns of eternity? Why do we live satisfied with our condition, without producing any spiritual fruit, or cultivating the graces of a meek and heavenly spirit? Why are our hearts so much devoted to pleasure, and so forgetful of God? It is because the Christian religion has not had its proper influence upon our temper and conduct,—it is because the heart is not devoted to God by a sense, a deep sense, of gratitude,—it is because “we love darkness rather than light;” the wages of sin more than the service of God. What will earthly pleasures profit? What will worldly enjoyments avail us, “if we neglect the one thing needful?” They will be taken from us, or we shall be separated from them, and then the man of pleasure will wish that he had served God with as much earnestness as he had been devoted to his sensual indulgences;—the man of the world will then perceive that the best of all riches is to be rich in faith and good works, and he will learn the justness of our Saviour's observation, from fatal experience, “What is a man profited if he shall gain the

whole world and lose his own soul?" Let me then, brethren, earnestly exhort you not to suffer your summer of life to pass away, without having turned to proper account the time and talents entrusted to your care, lest death should close your eyes in sin, and you should be excluded from the enjoyments of heaven.

Thirdly, We will consider the last clause of the text, "and we are not saved."

How awfully terrific must these words have been to the Jews who lived in the prophet's day, and who had forfeited the favour of GOD, by their wicked and unrighteous conduct! Though they had been selected among the nations of the earth as his chosen people, and had been favoured with a written declaration of his will, and their duty, "they minded earthly things,"—they loved the pleasures of sin, and so offended their heavenly benefactor, that He "withdrew the light of his countenance from them," and cast them out of his sight. But if their wickedness drew down the vengeance of heaven upon them, because they made not the most of the privileges which had been given them, of how much sorer punishment shall we be thought worthy, who are blest with a clearer light, more comprehensive views of our duty, and more especial obligations to perform it, if we neglect the end of our being, and pass the time of our sojourning here, without bringing forth the fruits of piety in their proper season! When we duly reflect upon what our Saviour has done for us, and how much He suffered to bring us from nature's darkness into marvellous light, can we continue to shut our eyes to the conviction of our own hearts, and still persevere in sin? Can we live and act like the daring unbeliever, or the confirmed infidel? If we possess any share of gratitude, we shall, if we feel as Christians, be induced to put away the evil of our

doings, and endeavour to make JESUS CHRIST the author and finisher of our faith.

There are, it is to be feared, some among us to whom these words, and "we are not saved," will touch the heart, like the piercing of a sword; some, who are yet in their sins, who have suffered the summer and harvest to remain barren and unprofitable, and who are yet very far from the kingdom of God. To such I would say, Think seriously what you are doing, and what will be the end of your folly. If you neglect the salvation provided for you by CHRIST, how can you escape the punishment which awaits your offences? You call yourselves Christians, and are ready to admit, "that there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby they can be saved, but the name of JESUS CHRIST," and yet you hesitate not "to crucify the Saviour afresh, and put Him to an open shame." Away, then, with this folly and delusion,—break off the fetters of sin, and dare boldly to become the servants of Him whose name you bear. Remember that the pleasures of sin are but for a season, and that season is short, but that eternal life is the gift of God. If you persevere in living to the world, and will not "attend to the things which belong to your peace,"—if you slight all the merciful calls and gracious warnings of a kind God, you will perish with the world, and have your portion with unrelenting sinners; "for if the righteous can scarcely be saved, how shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" Let me, then, exhort you to lose no more time in the ways of sin, but "to seek the LORD whilst He may be found, and to call upon Him whilst He is near," that He may have mercy upon you, and that your souls may be saved in the great day of trial.

THE HOLY GHOST THE COMFORTER.

GOSPEL FOR WHITSUNDAY.

BY THE

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ST. JOHN XIV. 18.

I will not leave you comfortless.

TRULY our GOD is a GOD of love! When we had become liable to his everlasting wrath, He provided an Atonement which he might accept without derogation to his attributes of perfect justice and holiness. When we had gone astray, every one after his own way, and had corrupted or destroyed the true knowledge of Him upon the earth, He preserved a remnant of truth and righteousness in the house of Abraham, and among his descendants lineal and spiritual. He erected his Church among the tribes of Israel, and extended it in the fulness of time to the isles of the Gentiles. He has since disseminated his Word by his ordinary providence or by miraculous power, until the very "ends of the world have seen the salvation of GOD." And, as if all this were not enough,—as if He were not content with providing grace and pardon for his fallen creatures, and inviting "all men everywhere" to accept them*,—He reveals Himself as full of compassion for our infirmities, as making merciful allowance for our imperfections,—as having a tender regard for our feelings, and a sympathy with our affections,—as taking thought for our comfort and satisfaction, no less than for our substantial welfare.

* Acts xvii. 30 ; 1 Tim. ii. 4.

He promises and He bestows his succours, almost before they are felt to be needed, amidst frailties which his eye alone is quick enough to discern, under afflictions which shun the participation of man, and in trials which endure no witness but Him who tempers and assuages them.

"I will not leave you comfortless," said the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind, to his sorrowing disciples, when He was on the point of bidding them farewell. What a depth of tenderness do these few simple words convey! What a perfect assurance do they express of the affection which subsisted between the Saviour and his followers! What solicitude do they imply on the part of our heavenly Lord, for the ignorant, unstable, easily-discouraged disciples, whom He was about to leave like sheep in the midst of wolves! And yet, our English translation, expressive as it is, gives but half the force of our Saviour's language. The literal rendering of the original is, "I will not leave you *orphans*." As if He had said, "I will not leave you like fatherless children to the cold charities of an unfeeling world. I will not expose you without protection to the cruelties of those who hate you, and would destroy you, because ye are my friends. I will not desert you in your holy simplicity and guilelessness to become a prey to the craftiness of the ungodly. Ye shall not be like infants, incapable of pleading your own cause and mine against the powers of the world, and destitute of an advocate to speak in your behalf. I will not suffer your innocence to be led astray by the various deceivers who will lie in wait for you,—the false prophets and the false Christs who will shortly rise up among you, striving to usurp dominion over your faith, and claiming your obedience as the representatives of Him whom ye shall have been bereft of. I will come unto you. I will be present with you, if not,

in body, yet in spirit and in power; and all men shall perceive and know, that, forsaken as ye may outwardly appear, there is One that careth for you even as a father cherisheth the son in whom he delighteth. And that ye may the better dispense with my personal intercourse, I will send you another Comforter,—another in *person*, but the same in *essence* with myself, and a second self in love towards you, and in the will and power to do you good; even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, and is one with the Father and with Me. He shall enlighten, sanctify, and strengthen you; He shall guide and support you through the troubles of this world, and finally bring you to the kingdom of my Father, whither I now ascend to prepare a place for you.”

Such was the import of our Saviour’s promise to his disciples. Some of the blessings comprised in it were necessary to his Church only in its earliest ages; and these have long ago had their accomplishment, and are no longer to be looked for. But others of them are requisite for Christians in all ages and under all circumstances; and these, therefore, may be considered as designed for universal and perpetual continuance. The spiritual necessities of men are the same from generation to generation; the weakness of the flesh is even now as dangerous,—the corruption of the natural heart as deep, —the malice of the devil as unmitigated, as when Peter denied, or Judas betrayed his Master, or “Satan filled the heart of Ananias to lie unto the Holy Ghost.” Were it otherwise, the Gospel must long since have lost its hold upon the affections of men; the second covenant, grown obsolete like the first, must have “decayed and waxed old, and been ready to vanish away:” whereas from the first it has been extending and strengthening its dominion, acquiring a secret influence, or exerting an

acknowledged sway; and our own times have witnessed such a revival of its energies, and so broad a reception of it in its spirit and its power as well as in word and in form, as the world probably has never paralleled since the days of the Apostles. The gifts of the Spirit ever commend themselves to the regenerate heart by their in-felt adaptation to its wants and desires, by their power to fill the void which no accumulation of earthly blessings avails to close. Especially, the COMFORTS of the Spirit are dear to the souls of believers; and if we may credit the testimony of holy men who have widely differed from each other in their speculative views, these comforts are the peculiar portion of *the tempted* and *the tried*, if they will but seek them in faith and in humility. It is of *spiritual consolations ordinarily vouchsafed to individuals* that I propose to speak. They are daily and hourly falling around us, invisible indeed to heedless and profane eyes, but full of real refreshment and strength, and of a quickening power independent of human agency; like the gracious dews of Paradise, which went up, we read, to water the face of the earth, while as yet there was not a man to till the ground.

Let us consider, then, a few of the occasions on which *the comforts of the Spirit* are enjoyed by believers.

1. The believer experiences comfort from the Holy Spirit of GOD, *amidst the vicissitudes of life*.

Evil as well as good is in this world allotted to all. The pious Christian enjoys no exemption. Often, indeed, it may be observed, that he seems peculiarly marked out for temporal calamity,—GOD thereby trying his faith as in a seven times heated furnace, well knowing that it can endure the proof, and that it will not be destroyed, but refined. And this stedfastness under grievous trial is owing to the *spiritual comfort* which the believer

receives. To him alone it is given to understand that his chastisement is a proof of God's love, and to feel how good it is for him to be afflicted. His eyes are opened to discern what is hidden from worldly sight, the worthlessness of the world's best gifts except so far as they are the means of promoting God's glory. When deprived of any of them therefore, by what he considers as God's own act, he does not repine; he only laments, if he lament at all, that one talent has been taken from him, by which he might have been able to do unto God acceptable service; and he seeks how he may best promote the same end by such means as are still in his possession;—by setting an example of patience, resignation, and humility,—by the cultivation of a cheerful and contented frame of mind,—by a willingness to balance his deliverance from the *snare*s of prosperity against the loss of its *advantages*,—and by a thankful acknowledgment and enjoyment of the blessings that remain. Directed by the Spirit to set his affections on things above, in these he finds his happiness, and the changes and chances of this mortal life become comparatively matters of indifference. He feels them indeed, for all must feel them until “our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved;” but he looks up hopefully, and forward with a confidence that he shall not be forsaken. His treasure is in heaven, and his heart is with it. And so full a conviction does he entertain of the unalterable goodness of his Heavenly Father, even when outward appearances are most discouraging, that he is ever ready to exclaim with the prophet Habakkuk, in the language of implicit reliance, “Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut *off from* the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls,

yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation*."

2. The believer is comforted by the Spirit *amidst the opposition of the world.*

"The offence of the cross" has not ceased, even among the professed followers of The Crucified. Often is the faithful disciple called upon to leave the ways of the world, and "go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing his reproach." And reproach is to many minds harder to bear than violence. It is a sore trial to encounter the injustice of men who will not appreciate our motives,—who call our deviation from the common track hypocrisy, or affectation, or imbecility, and who repress every strenuous exertion in the cause of religion as an unwarrantable interference with their own liberty. They who undertake uncompromisingly to teach the world the way of righteousness, either by precept or example, must be prepared to see the world assume an hostile attitude. Under the mask of much decorous acquiescence and constrained approbation, they will soon detect a rooted antipathy to their sentiments, and to their persons, ready to start into exercise upon the slightest provocation, and *finding* provocation in their purest actions, because in them the world feels itself most self-condemned. And while they will constantly hear large demands of indulgence towards human infirmity, urged in behalf of inexcusable offenders, they will receive little allowance for themselves, if in their laborious and trying course they are unhappily betrayed into inconsistency. Now, far be it from the servant of God to complain of this treatment as an unlooked-for hardship. It should have entered into his computation when he was "counting

* Heb. iii. 17, 18.

the cost" of his profession; for an Apostle long ago predicted the lot of "all that will live godly in CHRIST JESUS," (2 Tim. iii. 12,) and the modified persecution of modern times can seldom bear a comparison with the trials of those Saints of old, "of whom the world was not worthy." But it is *persecution* still, and comfort from above is needful to those who endure it: and, blessed be God, under every discouragement the HOLY SPIRIT is present with his succour. When the multitude of the gainsayers is most loud and contentious, He bestows on the simple-minded and single-hearted Christian "a mouth and wisdom" which none of his adversaries are able to resist. Strong in the power of Divine truth, he feels himself to be more than a match for their utmost subtlety. He wields in his hands "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," a weapon "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." Before such arms given him "from the armoury of God," the pride of carnal reason falls powerless. By degrees, the might of truth and of holiness is seen to prevail, and "wisdom is justified of her children." Like a city set on a hill, the purity and consistency of a Christian conversation draw the eyes of all men unto them. Many who at first recoiled from the steep ascent towards them, are in course of time brought to flee unto them out of the wilderness of sin and folly, as unto a place of refuge and of rest: and they, who once were loudest in railing, and bitterest in scoffing, and busiest in opposing, and deadliest in maligning, are converted like St. Paul, into the most zealous champions of the cause which aforetime they persecuted. Or, if these happy effects are not shortly discernible,—if "evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived,"—if "he that is unjust" continues "unjust still," and "he that is

filthy, filthy still," the faithful Christian is enabled to possess his soul in patience, and wait for the LORD's good time, committing his work unto Him, and nothing doubting that He will bring it to pass. He has that within which defies the force of external circumstances. He can shut out from his inner sense the noise and discord of a tumultuous world. He can withdraw into that haven of sweet and secret communion with his Almighty Father, whither no son of wickedness can follow,—where the voice of reproach and blasphemy is stilled,—and where Joy and peace, quietness and assurance reign unbroken, as among the Saints in the Paradise of God. What are they to him in those tranquil hours,—the strifes and vexations of the work-day world, its helps and hindrances, its loves and hatreds? He is surrounded by Sabbath calm, the repose of a soul at peace with itself and with its Maker. The hosts of God encamp around him: they minister unto him as unto an heir of salvation, and sustain Him with consolations which the world dreams not of. In the strength of this refreshment he proceeds on his way rejoicing; and if ever, overcome by human infirmity, he feels his heart sink and his spirit faint within him, he takes fresh courage from the recollection of past mercies, and from the assured conviction that God will not finally forsake his servant that trusteth in Him, will not suffer his truth to fail, nor abandon his accepted work because of men's frowardness or ungodliness.

3. The believer is comforted by the HOLY SPIRIT *under his sense of the manifold corruptions of his own heart.*

We all inherit a depraved nature, and in the very best of men, regenerate though they be, the inborn evil is never wholly subdued. For this life can never cease to be a state of probation; yet this it must cease to be, if men here attain to perfection. Various, indeed, are

the degrees of Christian attainment in this life, and various, probably, will be their reward hereafter ; but on this side the grave, the sincere follower of CHRIST will ever find some root of bitterness springing up to trouble him,—some remainder of corruption,—some latent affection for sin,—some short-coming or falling from grace, or relapse into evil habit,—enough to humble him before God and his own conscience, and to convince him that “he has not yet apprehended, neither is already perfect.” He will often perceive himself to be wanting in spiritual affection. He will find his zeal deadened, his devotion chilled, his anxiety about the meat that perisheth excluding from his thoughts the things which are eternal. He will often have reason to mourn over his want of faith, his distrust of God’s goodness, his impatience under His reproofs ; to confess his unwillingness to look steadfastly forward “to the recompense of the reward,” and to lament over the insignificance of his exertions in proportion to his ability and opportunities. And tracing most of these evils to the corruptness of his natural heart, he will find in it perpetual cause for sorrow and self-abasement.

And to what quarter shall he look for a remedy ? whither apply for strength ? Whither, but to God’s Holy Spirit ? whither, but to those fountains of grace which are always open to those who thirst for them ? “All his fresh springs are in Him.” It was especially for the purpose of obviating the sad effects of natural corruption that the Comforter was given to the Church. “The Spirit helpeth our infirmities,” for so ignorant are we and void of understanding, that “we know not what to pray for as we ought*.” The very sense of our infirmity is His gift, and it is by revealing to us and convincing us of this prime source of our disorders, that He prepares our cure,

* Romans viii. 26.

and paves the way for our recovery. And gradually, but surely, so long as the believer humbly looks to Him, does He restore and confirm his spiritual health, if not eradicating "the plague of his heart," yet, at least, mitigating its malignancy. He enlightens the conscience to discern the hidden symptoms of depravity, to follow them through their various complications, and seek for each its proper remedial grace. And of that grace He is, in His proper office, the especial dispenser. Whatever is requisite to abate the virulence of sinful appetites and passions, that He delights largely and unceasingly to bestow on faith and prayer. With the temptation He makes a way to escape. Together with the conviction of sin He imparts a good hope of overcoming it. The Christian feels that, though he may tremble, he needs not despair; for his God is ever with him, leading him as it were by the hand, and extricating him by sure degrees from his darkness and his danger. Often as he may experience shame and self-reproach,—often as he may be bowed to the dust by a sense of his unworthiness, it is his to believe, with "the full assurance of hope," that he is not forsaken, nor given up to a reprobate mind. He knows that the Spirit of Holiness is striving within him, and from day to day obtaining a completer mastery. He finds light continually shining around his path, strength springing up in proportion to his trials, and before him, as this life wanes and the world recedes from his view, the nearer and clearer vision of perfect deliverance, and everlasting peace.

Oh, what a blessed thing is the religion of CHRIST, which can work such effects as these! which can enable a weak and sinful mortal in the extremity of his self-humiliation, instead of despairing of God's mercy, to "count it all joy when he falls into divers temptations, knowing that the trial of his faith worketh patience, and

patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed*,” and all because “the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, by the HOLY GHOST which He hath given him !” What a power must the faith of the Gospel have to console and to sustain, when even “a wounded spirit,” the least endurable of all afflictions, is not proof against its influence ! Mighty and mysterious is the wisdom of the Most High, in thus providing succour for his servants ! unspeakable the Saviour’s love in taking such tender care that they shall not be left comfortless ! “He knoweth whereof we are made, He remembereth that we are dust,” and therefore He condescends to make us, by his Spirit, partakers of his own Divine nature† ; and purifies by the communications of his all-sufficient grace, the frailties and corruptions of poor humanity. “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”

Such are the inestimable COMFORTS of the Spirit ; such is the felicity of those with whom He comes and dwells, according to their Saviour’s promise. It is a felicity which few believe in, and which none can understand save those who experience it ; “a joy wherewith a stranger intermeddleth not,” but pure, substantial, and sufficing ; imparting to this troubled scene a foretaste of the enjoyments of the saints in light, and exalting the weaknesses and trials of our nature into a faint but ever-growing conformity to the Divine perfections.

But now an anxious inquiry arises. Is this happy state *indefectible* ? Is no falling away to be apprehended ? Are the influences of the Spirit never withdrawn ? Is the promise of his abiding for ever to be understood in so large a sense, as to imply, that every individual who may once have received Him shall enjoy

* James i. 2 ; Rom. v. 3.

† 2 Pet. i. 4 ; 2 Cor. iii. 18.

his presence, without change, to the end of life? That the work of sanctification once commenced, can suffer no interruption? That the power of Satan shall be so irretrievably broken as to render it *impossible* for him to regain his sway? Is there no longer any danger of "drawing back unto perdition,"—of growing weak in faith, and cold in love, and weary in well-doing? May the disciple of CHRIST, once assured within himself that he *has*, or that he has *had*, the Spirit, sit down without fear or misgiving, and reckon that his name is indelibly enrolled among the elect of God? No. If this be so, it was an useless caution to bid the Thessalonians* "quench not the Spirit;" a needless warning to the Corinthians†, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;" a superfluous admonition to the Hebrews‡ to "look diligently, lest any man fail of (or, as it is rendered in the margin, *fall from*) the grace of God;" and it must have been a frivolous supposition which the Apostle makes with every appearance of earnestness and solemnity, when he declares that "it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the HOLY GHOST, and have tasted of the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, *if they shall fall away*, to renew them again unto repentance §."

The doctrine of our Church on this subject in her 16th Article, agrees with the voice of Scripture and the lessons of experience and common sense: "After we have received the HOLY GHOST, we may depart from grace given and fall into sin, and by the grace of God we may arise again and amend our lives: and therefore they are to be condemned which say, they can no more

* 1 Thess. v. 19.

† 1 Cor. x. 12.

‡ Heb. xii. 15.

§ Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6.

sin as long as they live here." The truth is, that, think as highly as we please of our Christian privileges, (and we can scarcely value them *too* highly,)—make proof of them, as we are bound, to the uttermost,—rejoice in them, as we cannot fail when we have "learned CHRIST," as the source of our best strength and comfort; still, it is not God's purpose in bestowing them that they should altogether turn earth into heaven or men into angels. Hereafter we may become,—and it is our firm hope that we shall become,—*incapable* of sinning, as we believe of those pure and blessed spirits who minister before the throne of God. Hereafter we may perhaps "attain that high perfection of bliss wherein now the elect angels are without possibility of falling*." But such is not the happiness of mortality. The Spirit is given freely, but only to assist, not to supersede our efforts. We must strive and struggle, for our life is a warfare; and we *may* fall,—fall so irrecoverably that, as we have just heard, it may be impossible to renew us again unto repentance. Grant that this last may be a rare and extreme case. Allow it for a general rule that God is willing to receive all that truly turn to Him. But even an extreme case may possibly be our own: in fact, *were it in our favour*, we should be very willing to believe it our own. And it can scarcely be gathered from the scope of the Apostle's argument, that he intended to describe a rare or an extreme case. It may be ours, my brethren. And, oh, that I could adequately paint its wretchedness! Conceive if you can, the misery of a soul cast out, or rather, self-exiled from the light of God's presence. Once it was a holy and a happy being, walking in glory and in peace, and rejoicing to perceive itself day by day drawing nearer to perfection. What a delight was there *then*

* HOOKER, *Eccl. Pol.*, b. i. § 4.

in prayer, in the inward breathings of faith and gratitude towards the Giver of all blessing! What a happiness was there in communing with GOD whenever a moment could be stolen from the vain tumult of the world, and in meditating in secret upon the mysteries of Providence, and the wonders of redeeming love! What a pleasure in taking sweet counsel together with those who were like-minded, and who loved the LORD JESUS CHRIST in sincerity,—in walking with them in the house of GOD as friends,—in co-operating with them in every scheme of piety and charity,—in striving to alleviate the burden of human suffering, and to diffuse the knowledge and love of CHRIST our Saviour through the recesses of ignorance and sin! And *now*, how is all changed! That soul, late so glad in its own inner world of righteousness and peace, and nourished by daily communications of heavenly food and sustenance, has forsaken its first love, and grovels among the things of sense. The solace of prayer is no more. Prayer itself is no more. To seek the LORD *now* is a thought full of despair. Meditation is become a horror, self-reflection intolerable. Behind, there is a vision of mournful and reproachful faces,—the faces of Christian friends, once beaming with kindness and sympathy, but now not to be contemplated without shame. Those friends are still discerned from afar, going on their way rejoicing. A faint echo from their voices, a distant report of their quiet labours of love, is borne from time to time to that unhappy soul. But there is no fellowship between them now. The sound has almost become a strange language, and summons up none but painful associations. “They are nothing to me,” the apostate mutters to himself; “their ways are not my ways, nor their thoughts my thoughts, nor will their end be my end. There was a time when I too knew the joy

and peace of believing, and when I could have pointed to some *evidences* of my faith, in such a conversation as became the Gospel of CHRIST. I was their fellow-labourer, they my fellow-helpers; and we ‘stood fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the truth of the Gospel.’ Yes; I *was* a chosen vessel*,—a partaker of grace,—on the way to eternal glory. But I have turned aside from the way of happiness; and behold, between me and all that I once delighted in, there is a great gulf fixed. I may look through the gates into the Paradise where God’s servants dwell. I may watch their steps—I may hear their songs; but I may not enter. Its ways, once so familiar and still not to be remembered without emotion, shall be visited by me no more. I am not fit for that blessed society. The glory hath departed from me. God hath forsaken me. I am become hateful in my own eyes, and I hate those who pity and would gladly reclaim me, but whose pity and whose counsels I will not brook. The only consolation left me is, to extract what sweets I can from the dregs of what God has cursed.

“ ‘ So farewell hope! and with hope farewell fear!
All good to me is lost: Evil be thou my good!’ ”

MILTON.

My brethren, if we would save ourselves from this state of fearful abandonment, we must cherish our privileges while they are yet vouchsafed to us. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. On our *present* use of our *present* blessings depend our hopes for eternity. And may that gracious Saviour and Lord, who has sent his good Spirit to be our Comforter, so keep us steadfast in his ways, that we may at the last be “presented holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight, having continued in the faith grounded and settled, and not moved away from the hope of the Gospel.”

GOOD FRIDAY.

BY THE

REV. ABNER W. BROWN, A.B.,

VICAR OF PYTCHLEY, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, AND RURAL DEAN.

HEBREWS x. 12, 13, 14.

This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

THIS is the day on which our blessed Saviour offered that great atonement of which the text speaks. When He had come upon earth and had begun to show Himself unto Israel, John the Baptist pointed Him out to the people, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!" After He "had done about doing good" for four years, He fulfilled that prophecy of John the Baptist, by offering up the sacrifice which doth take away the sin of the world. The tender compassion and undeserved love of Almighty God our Creator towards us the guilty children of Adam, provided for us that sacrifice, and also a great High Priest to offer it up. "He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*." "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them: and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." "Now, then, we (his

* St. John iii. 16.

ministers) are ambassadors for CHRIST, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in CHRIST's stead be ye reconciled to God." "For He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, (that is, hath laid upon Him the iniquities of us all, as sins were laid of old upon the lamb which was offered for a sin offering,) that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*."

Through the great sacrifice offered up at Calvary this day, and through that alone, are men saved from the dreadful sufferings of everlasting death. By its blessed value were Noah, Job, and faithful Abraham saved. Through it alone were saved Moses and Aaron, Samuel and David, Isaiah, Daniel, and all the servants of God in Israel. For these all looked forward in faith to Messiah as their Redeemer who should come; even as we now look back in faith unto Him as our Redeemer who has already come. And as the Jews thus looked forward, whilst we, on the other hand, look back to the same great sacrifice, so the Jewish and Christian ways of worship have differed from each other accordingly.

Among the Jews were priests and high priests, who offered up particular gifts; and their whole worship was fixed by the law which God gave to Moses at Sinai. There were sacrifices of bulls and goats, of rams and lambs, on whose heads the worshippers laid their hands in confession of sin, and whose blood was then shed, their lives taken, in solemn religious services. All these things were only the appointed examples and shadows of good things yet to come, and not the very image or reality of the things themselves: for it was not possible that such sacrifices could make the comers thereunto

* 2 Cor. v. 19, 20, 21.

perfect; it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin. And, indeed, the Jewish worship itself showed this: for the same kind of sacrifices had to be offered year by year continually; both the daily morning and evening sacrifice of a lamb offered by the ordinary priests, and also the great offering of blood made once a year at the Fast of Atonement by the High Priest alone. If these sacrifices could really have put away sin, then the worshippers when once purged should have had no more conscience of sins; but so far from that, they had to be constantly repeated; and there was a fresh remembrance again made of sins every year even by the same persons, because their sins were not really taken away by the blood so shed. The use of the sacrifices and ceremonies was only to fix their faith upon Him who was afterwards to come and be a sufficient, and true sacrifice, and really clear away sins.

But the Apostle points out in the verses before the text, and, indeed, for two chapters before, in what way the religious worship of Christianity differs from that appointed to the Jews. He calls Christianity a better covenant, established upon better promises. Let us bless God that He has cast our lot in this better covenant; in a Christian land, and in Christian times. In the verses before the text, we read that when CHRIST cometh into the world, He saith unto God, "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared me; in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God;" and the Apostle adds, "By the which will *we* are sanctified through the offering of the body of CHRIST once for all:" that is to say, we who by faith are partakers of that one sacrifice, once offered in the death of JESUS CHRIST. CHRIST became our sacrifice when his body was

slain, which had been prepared for Him in order that He who could not die might be able to die. Every high priest of old was ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices, the blood of which he carried into the holy of holies ; wherefore it was of necessity that JESUS CHRIST, when consecrated to be our Great High Priest for evermore, should have somewhat also to offer. This He had, this He did, when He offered up Himself ; when, in the fulness of time, He appeared on earth to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. That holy place was heaven itself, into which He carried his own body, delivered from the power of the grave, and there appeared in the presence of God for us.

We all know what the word *sacrifice* means in ordinary affairs : it is the giving up something valuable, to save, or to obtain something more valuable. A man will give up all he hath, perhaps, to save his life, or the lives of his family, or the life of some dear friend. Some mothers have given up their own life to save the life of a child. The Redeemer's sacrifice is shewn to us in Scripture even in this light ; for it is written, " Scarcely for a righteous man will one die ; yet, peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die : but God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners CHRIST died for us*." God spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all ; and that Son, though He was rich, yet for our sakes willingly became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich. He counted not his life dear unto Him, but became a sacrifice for us, although we had nothing to recommend us to his favour,

* Rom. v. 7, 8.

except his own compassion for our necessities, and for the sore and endless punishment which hung over us for our transgressions. It was on this day that He completed his blessed and merciful work; for us He had come upon earth; for us had lived a life of sorrow, want, and anguish; for us had suffered shame, rebuke, and condemnation; and when, at last, He was crucified and hanged on the accursed tree for us, He said, "It is finished," and bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Thus He became our sacrifice.

The text explains the nature, the value, and the ends of that great sacrifice, so offered for us, as on this day, at Calvary.

The 12th verse saith, *This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins*, for ever sat down; that is to say, This High Priest did so, who was better than the Jewish high priests;—this person, for whom God had prepared a body that might be of more value to expiate sin than the bodies of beasts offered by the Jews, and who had come on earth to do God's will. We all acknowledge that JESUS CHRIST is GOD; but you observe in this passage, that our salvation depended also on his having a true body, which could suffer death; that is, depended on his being man as well as GOD. We believe and confess that our Lord JESUS CHRIST, the Son of GOD, is GOD and man:—GOD, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; man, of the substance of his mother, born in the world—perfect GOD and perfect man. It was needful that He should become man that He might be our sacrifice: accordingly, He took our nature upon Him, was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted. The Creator of all took to Himself such a body as could suffer and die; the Lord of Life humbled Himself and became obedient unto death,

that He, by the grace of God, might taste of death for every man. It was not less needful for Him to become man, that He might be our High Priest. For every high priest of old was taken from among men, and was ordained for men, that he might have compassion on them that are ignorant and out of the way, for that he himself also was compassed about with infirmity*. So CHRIST also was not ashamed to be called our brother; He took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses; and, though He were a son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.

The Jewish high priests needed to offer up sacrifice first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people: but not so our Redeemer. Called of GOD an High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; and having been made perfect by the completion of his work, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.

That which was done on this day especially teaches us that our Saviour's human nature was taken upon Him for our salvation. The angels, whether the good or the bad, cannot die; and therefore JESUS was made a little lower than them, for the suffering of death. Consider what He, as a man, underwent to-day for you. Betrayed, mocked, and set at nought; scourged, smitten, and crowned with thorns; worn out with an evening of unutterable agony, and a weary sleepless night of revilings and cruelties; made to carry the beam of his cross, until apparently his strength] failed, and it was laid upon another; He was crucified, that is, fastened to the cross with the nails through his hands and feet, and left thus

* Heb. v. 1, 2.

to hang until hunger, agony, and exhaustion should make Him faint and die. Yet, this was but bodily suffering! how much more dreadful the load of sorrow and anguish which overwhelmed his soul. The Prophet once said to Israel, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that He will not hear*:" and the same Prophet said of Messiah, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on *Him* the iniquity of us all†." How did that fearful load of sin, *the iniquity of us all*, hide his Father's face from Him, and separate between Him and his God, (although He had no sin, and knew no sin of his own,) until He cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Surely it was our griefs He bare, our sorrows He carried. It was for our transgressions He was wounded, for our iniquities He was bruised: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with his stripes we are healed. It was not for Himself that Messiah was cut off, but because He was our sacrifice.

The text explains to us next, the precious value of the sacrifice so offered for us. "This Man after he had offered *one* sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." Why *one* sacrifice only? Because no other of like value could be found, and because not more than that one was needful.

The Jewish priests, as we have already seen, had to offer many sacrifices, and to repeat oftentimes the same; because their offerings were of no real value to wash guilt from the soul. But CHRIST was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, which taketh away the sin of the world; and therefore his blood cleanseth us from all sin‡,

* Isaiah lix. 2.

† Isaiah liii. 6.

‡ 1 John i. 7.

and needed not to be shed but once for all. If it needed to be shed repeatedly, then it would be like the Jewish sacrifices, which required to be offered up continually because they had no real value against sin. If we either seek to add anything to the sacrifice of the death of CHRIST, or if we think of that sacrifice as of one which has to be frequently repeated, then we dishonour it; as if *we* could improve its value, or as if it were only feeble and shadowy like the Jewish sacrifices. Let us remember who the sacrifice was. It was, indeed, *a man* that died; but was it not God who gave Himself for us, by "taking of the manhood unto God" that he might be able to die? As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one CHRIST. St. Paul charged ministers to bear this in mind, when he said, "The HOLY GHOST hath made you overseers to feed the Church of God which He hath purchased with his own blood*. That most precious blood cannot again be shed nor offered any more: for then there would be a High Priest again making a remembrance of sins already for ever put away: there would be a disregard of the promise of the New Covenant (a little after the text), "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more;" and where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. When the Jewish priests offered, their sacrifice was not *for ever*, but only until the next day or the next year, when it had to be repeated over again. But when our High Priest offered, the value of his one sacrifice lasted *for ever*, that is, *on to the end* of the time when children of fallen Adam should be born, and sacrifice for their sins should be needful. Having finished the sacrifice He needed not again to offer; his work was completed; He sat down as

* Acts xx. 28.

one who hath no more occasion to labour, but waits to receive the end and fruit of it.

Again, when the Jewish priests had offered sacrifice for themselves and their brethren, they went humbly forth from the holy places. Being sinners themselves and servants of the Most High, they dared not to sit down in the presence of God, but went reverently to their own abodes until their work should begin again next day or next year. Not so, our Redeemer; He was not a sinner, but spotless and without offence; nor could any convict Him of sin towards God or man. Moreover, He was a Son, who had only taken upon Him the form of a servant awhile to save mankind. Neither had He to return again and repeat his office next day or next year, for the propitiation for our sins had been fully and for ever made. Therefore, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins, He *sat down* as holy in the holiest presence of God; as no longer the servant but the Son of God, in his Father's house and at his Father's right hand, as one who had no other atonement to make for ever. He sat down until the end of time, expecting, or waiting, until the years fixed "before the world was," should have run out; until the appointed season should come, after which was to be the harvest, the end of the world, when his enemies should be made his footstool or put under his feet. He had at first come to destroy the works of the Devil, even sin, sorrow, and death; and this He had done by the sacrifice of Himself; for through death He overcame him that had the power of death,—that is, the Devil*. But as you often see the sap and signs of life lingering about a tree long after it has been hewn down and lieth on the ground, and when you know that it is dead and its life for ever destroyed, so is it with the power of the Devil, and with

* Heb. ii. 14.

sin, sorrow, and death, his works;—they are cut down and their life destroyed; but their power lingers, and the remnants of their life continue; and JESUS CHRIST hath sat down, waiting until the fixed time arrives for the full effects of his sacrifice to be made manifest. Then Death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed, and the bodies which he hath turned into dust shall be raised incorruptible, and mortality shall be swallowed up of life. For “CHRIST was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation*,”—that is to say, He shall not appear any more clothed with their sins which the LORD had laid on Him, for those sins He hath for ever put away; but bringing salvation unto them, raising them up from death to eternal blessedness, inasmuch as He hath obtained eternal redemption for them, and will give unto them eternal life, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand.

Lastly. The text explains the ends of the great sacrifice made for us by CHRIST as on this day: “By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” By the grace of GOD, JESUS CHRIST tasted death for every man, and hath redeemed not only us, but all mankind. The merciful GOD who hath made all men, hateth nothing that He hath made, nor willeth the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. Are there among you any who feel that although you profess and call yourselves Christians, you have been forgetting what belongs to that profession, and have lived rather as heathens and strangers to GOD? Bethink you that for you, even you, hath JESUS CHRIST offered up the sacrifice of redemption and shed his blood for you. Repent and turn yourselves from all your

* Heb. ix. 28.

transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Believe on the Lord JESUS CHRIST and you shall be saved.

But this passage speaks not only of all mankind, but of a smaller class of persons: "He hath perfected them that are sanctified." And who are they? In the beginning of the chapter, St. Paul saith that the Jewish sacrifices could never make the comers thereunto perfect: but in the text, he saith that our High Priest, by the sacrifice of Himself, "*hath* perfected for ever (that is on to the end of all) them that are sanctified." So also in another place, he saith, "The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God*." The Law of Moses could not take away sin, nor purge the conscience, nor assure the worshipper of forgiveness for the sake of its sacrifices; for even David cried out under a heavy sense of sin, "Thou desirest not sacrifice else would I give it. Thou delightest not in burnt offerings†. But grace and truth came by JESUS CHRIST; for He hath made a perfect atonement and satisfaction for all sin—a propitiation for the sins of the whole world: and his blood shall always purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

When the worshipper of old offered a sacrifice he put his hand upon his head, and thus laid his sins upon it, and its blood was shed for him: and although it was of no value in itself, yet GOD accepted the service, and repeatedly promised that He would Himself sanctify both the priests and the worshippers. But when the fulness of the time was come for the real putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself, "JESUS, that He might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without

* Heb. vii. 19.

† Ps. li. 16.

the gate*.” And when He sent forth his apostle Paul, He said unto him, “Unto the Gentiles now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith, that is in me†.” It is they that believe in Him, therefore, who are sanctified. It is written further, that JESUS being made perfect, (that is, having finished the work which GOD gave Him to do‡,) “became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him§.” It is also said, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city||:” and again, “This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son JESUS CHRIST, and love one another as He gave us commandment¶]. These various passages teach us, that faith in CHRIST which sanctifieth is a living faith which produces fruit, and not a dead faith which hath not works. It is one which can be called obeying CHRIST, as well as believing in Him.

The offering whereby the Saviour “hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,” has its efficacy and power, because it was accepted by GOD. It restored us to the favour of our Creator, so that GOD can be just and yet the justifier of them that believe upon CHRIST. He was exalted by the right hand of GOD, and ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even that the Lord GOD might dwell among them; and he sent forth therefore the gift of the HOLY GHOST at the day of Pentecost, or Whitsunday, to sanctify us

* Heb. xiii. 12.

§ Heb. v. 9.

† Acts xxvi. 18.

|| Rev. xxii. 14.

‡ John xvii. 4.

¶ 1 John iii. 23.

wholly in body and soul, to give us new life, and create us again unto good works, which GOD hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

He is our Forerunner who hath entered for us within the veil of heaven, there to appear for us continually in the presence of GOD. There, where CHRIST sitteth at the right hand of GOD, is fixed our hope, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul firm and sure; because JESUS, who hath redeemed us and is our Mediator, is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto GOD by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

You have been grafted into the covenant of the Church of GOD, "which He hath purchased with his own blood." When you were so admitted into those inestimable privileges, of which the Sacrament of Baptism was ordained by CHRIST Himself as a means whereby we receive them, and a pledge to assure us thereof, there were promised on your behalf repentance that you should forsake sin, and faith that you should stedfastly believe the promises of GOD made to you. Have you remembered those promises of repentance and faith? If you have not, how can you expect the blessings so provided for you? And yet, forgetful though you may have been, you are of GOD's family, for which our Lord JESUS CHRIST was contented to be betrayed and given up into the hands of sinful men, and to suffer death upon the cross, and for whose benefit He now reigneth with GOD for evermore. He came on earth to save, and He doth save, by his one offering of Himself. Accepted of GOD as a sacrifice for us, He hath been by the right hand of GOD exalted, hath received of the Father the promise of the HOLY GHOST, and hath shed forth his blessed influences; yea, by Him He is with us alway even unto the

end. For the Lord God the HOLY GHOST dwelleth amongst us by his blessed word, his sacraments, his holy day, his stated worship—public and private, his appointed ministry; all of which He blesses. They who use them in sincerity and truth shall grow in grace; and they that overcome and endure to the end, shall receive inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in Christ. Mark the course of their lives. They, through grace, obey the calling of God; they are justified freely; they are made the sons of God by adoption; are made like the image of his only begotten Son JESUS CHRIST; they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by GOD's mercy, attain unto everlasting felicity. And whence come all these great and endless blessings? From the one offering whereby JESUS CHRIST hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Did the Saviour thus place Himself between us and deserved punishment? How great was his compassion, how vast our debt of gratitude to him! How heavy was our weight of sin which could not else be pardoned; how fearful our danger, which allowed no other way of deliverance! If it pleased the LORD to bruise his only Son, and put the holy and innocent Saviour to grief, making his soul an offering for sin, how grievous unto GOD must sin be! He had of old sent unto his people by the prophets, saying, "O do not this abominable thing which I hate*." Who, therefore, will not hate sin, even though it be his own sin, inasmuch as it hath caused the Saviour to become a sacrifice before he could deliver us from its fearful consequences? If we hope for salvation through Him, then we acknowledge that it was for our sin He died; and if He died for *our* sin, and bearing our

* Jerem. xliv. 4.

sin, then we are dead unto sin. How then shall we, who are dead unto sin, live any longer therein? How shall we grieve the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption?

Let us continually, therefore, give humble and hearty thanks to GOD the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for this redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour CHRIST. To the end that we should always remember his exceeding great love, in thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which, by his precious blood-shedding, He hath so obtained for us, He hath instituted and ordained the holy sacrament of the LORD's Supper, as a pledge of his love, and for a continual remembrance of the sacrifice of his death, and of the benefits which we receive thereby. And now, as the Son of GOD did vouchsafe to yield up his soul by death upon the cross for your salvation, so it is your duty to receive the communion, in remembrance of that sacrifice of his death, as He Himself hath commanded. To this end, examine yourselves whether you repent you truly of your sins, and stedfastly purpose to lead a new life; whether you have a lively faith in GOD's mercy through CHRIST, with a thankful remembrance of his death; and whether you are in charity with all men, seeing He died for them as well as for you. Remember that He made upon the cross, by his one oblation of Himself, once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; and then ascended, with his glorified body, into heaven for us, and sat down at the right hand of GOD until his second coming. He never can be offered any more, nor can his body descend amongst us any more, until He cometh again, the second time, without sin unto salvation. Yet is his body given, taken, and eaten in the Supper of the LORD,

after an heavenly and spiritual manner: and to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which is broken is a partaking of the body of CHRIST, and the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of CHRIST. Henceforward, we need no more offering for our sins, though we need that our gracious LORD would grant us so to eat the flesh of his dear Son and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in Him and He in us. It is for us, therefore, to continue, according to his command, a perpetual memory of his precious death,—that one perfect and sufficient sacrifice once offered by Him upon the cross;—that we, receiving from time to time, his creatures of bread and wine, and according to his own holy institution, may be partakers of his most blessed body and blood, for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls, until we shall see Him hereafter come again, in like manner as the Apostles saw Him at first ascend up in heaven. O let these things be unto you practical truths, to produce in you the fruits of godly and holy living, and not merely histories which you hear with the hearing of the ear, as though they had little to do with your own eternal salvation!

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THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

FOR EASTER, 1846.

BY THE

REV. ABNER W. BROWN, A.B.,

VICAR OF PYTCHLEY, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, AND RURAL DEAN.

ROMANS VI. 9, 10, 11.

Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AS the Saviour's death declared that He was truly man, so his resurrection showed that He was GOD. He became man that He might be one with us—might do the will of GOD in our nature—might be a fitting sacrifice for our sins—might die for us; and Good Friday, the day on which He died, was a day for us especially to meditate on this redemption. But He was more than man; He was more mighty than death, or him who had the power of death, that is, the Devil: and He was declared to be the Son of GOD with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*. This is the day on which He arose from the dead, because He was mightier than all our foes. To this end He both died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living†.

* Rom. i. 4.

† Rom. xiv. 9.

Nor let us look upon the resurrection of our blessed Lord as an event of less moment to us than his death. It is true that our salvation cometh only through the merits of his death, for without that sacrifice there could have been no escape for guilty man; but neither could there have been any salvation for us without his resurrection. Notwithstanding that his death was a full and sufficient atonement for all our sins, yet even after it we must have perished had the right hand of Satan been able to keep our Saviour in the prison of the grave. St. Paul saith, "If CHRIST be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain." "If CHRIST be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins; then they also which are fallen asleep in CHRIST are perished*." The thousands, young and old, who have died from the beginning of time until now, have all perished, even though they died in faith, if so be that CHRIST hath not risen; and on this day of Easter we call this to mind, and bless God that all such fears are nought. "For now is CHRIST risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept†." Great as is the comfort flowing to us from faith in the death of CHRIST, St. Paul shows that the comfort of knowing that He is risen is even greater. "Who is He that condemneth? It is CHRIST that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us‡." It was after He had risen that He said unto his Apostles, "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations§." So important was it that his resurrection should be known unto all, that "He

* 1 Cor. xv. 14, 18.

† 1 Cor. xv. 20.

‡ Rom. viii. 34.

§ Matt. xxviii. 18.

showed Himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days*." And when He had left this earth, the Apostles lost no time in appointing another ordained witness, instead of Judas who had by transgression fallen from his office, saying, "Of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection†."

This is the day of that glorious resurrection; the day when we should praise and glorify God for having overthrown the power of Satan and all the effects of sin; the day for us to remember, that since by man came death, so by man (when joined unto the Godhead in our blessed Saviour) came also the resurrection of the dead‡.

The text, as it stands, explains to us the nature of our Lord's resurrection; how it has brought salvation to us; and what effect it ought to have upon our daily life.

I. It explains the nature of our Lord's resurrection : "*Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him.*" Having finished the work of atonement by dying as a sacrifice for us, there remained no need for Him to continue under the power of death: He owed nothing further, because the debt of death due for sin was paid. Having no sin, there was no need for that body which God had prepared Him to be purified by being turned again into dust. God would not suffer his Holy One to see corruption, nor leave his soul in hell, that is, in the state of separate souls. As man He had died; but it was not possible that He should be holden by the bonds, and penalties, and power of death, for He was God as well as man. When his work was done,

* Acts i. 3.

† Acts i. 21, 22.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 21.

and He had remained sufficiently in the grave to prove that his death was really a separation of soul and body, He arose from the dead and became the first fruits of them that slept; and showed that his work was done and his atonement accepted. Though He had no sin, yet as on Him was laid the iniquity of us all, and He took it upon Him; therefore death, the wages of sin, belonged to Him, and He died. He submitted willingly unto death, intending to rise again after three days. And He had said before his death, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again: no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again*." Being Lord of all, He was Lord also of death: but as death had mastered man at first, so JESUS, the second Adam, came that He might master death as a man; and He humbled himself and became obedient unto death that He might overcome death. He had promised from of old that He would "swallow up death in victory;" and had said, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues: O grave, I will be thy destruction†." And his Apostle was accordingly able to say, "O death where is thy sting; O grave where is thy victory? Thanks be to GOD which giveth us the victory through our Lord JESUS CHRIST‡." When He arose the third day, it was because sin and death had no more that they could do to Him. He had said that He would rise the third day, and Satan, sin, and death could not prevent Him; for He had paid the penalty and was free for ever. And in this we see how He

* John x. 17, 18.

† Isai. xxv. 8; Hosca xiii. 14.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 57.

is far above the children of men ; for they, as a race, shall not rise until the end, until all that are to be born unto Adam shall have lived. The sinful and unrepenting, who at their first death leave the world with hearts unchanged and at enmity against GOD, must meet also the second death, which is, to be cast into the lake of fire. But JESUS had in Him no enmity against GOD—no unholiness ; and over Him the second death hath no power. His death had been to put away the sin of others, and set them free from the penalty due to them ; and when by his one offering of Himself He had for ever perfected them that were sanctified, death's power over Him ceased. Death hath no more dominion over Him ; neither the first or bodily death, nor yet the second or spiritual death : He dieth no more. Risen from the grave, He is no more within the territories of death, but is set down at the right hand of GOD, waiting until death and all his enemies shall be made his footstool. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. When that day, "the day of redemption" cometh, then shall all bodies arise and be joined again to their souls. Then shall the sea give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell (that is, the place of souls, good or bad, which are separate from their bodies,) shall give up the dead which are in them ; and they shall be judged every man according to their works. And death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire,—that is, the second death*. Thus it is that CHRIST being raised from the dead dieth no more : death hath no more dominion over Him ; and shall, when the appointed time cometh, be utterly destroyed before Him.

II. The text further explains how the LORD's resur-

* Rev. xx. 14.

rection has brought salvation to us: "*In that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.*" As regards his death, it was once only, and it was to put away sin: but as regards his resurrection, it was for ever, and unto God. Once hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself: the second time He shall appear, without sin, unto salvation. The Law of Moses, (which was but a shadow of the real way of salvation,) required that blood should be often shed and life often taken away, and that the high priest should offer the same sacrifices year by year continually, because they could not take away the guilt of sin. But JESUS CHRIST, (the real way of salvation, the Truth, and the Life,) only needed to shed his blood once, to lay down his life once, and to offer his sacrifice once; because He was the Lamb, and also the High Priest who could and did really take away the guilt of sin. "He his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes we are healed*." He was the second Adam, our Covenant Head, and what He did was not for Himself, or for his own sake, but for us and for our sake; and as in Adam all died, so in CHRIST shall all be made alive. In that He died, He died unto sin: on the one hand, to expiate its guilt and save from its consequences; and on the other, to destroy in human nature the body of sin, and deliver from its power. "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned (or overthrew the reign of,) sin in the flesh†." The Redeemer had taken on Him our nature in every point, except sin: He was a man like us in all points, except that in his nature there was not, and could not

* 1 Peter ii. 24.

† Rom. viii. 3.

possibly be, any trace of evil, and in his acts nothing even approaching to sin. And He had taken our sins upon Him, as a heavy load of guilt, for which He was ready to suffer, and which He expiated and washed away with his blood. And as his death atoned for all the sins of all mankind, who ever have lived or shall live, and yet will avail none who refuse to lay hold of Him by faith; so also was it sufficient for the condemnation or destruction of all sin in the human heart, and yet none will have their evil nature overthrown who refuse to take hold of Him in penitent faith, or as it were to be crucified with Him in heart. "Our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin*." Thus are his death and his resurrection connected together in our salvation.

When the Saviour died unto sin, it was but once; for when his death had been completed, the whole object of it was gained. If a man be really dead, it is merely a matter of time how long he shall continue so. JESUS was truly dead—neither asleep, nor in a trance, but dead; and his soul as fully separate from his body as i He had been dead for thousands of years. When Lazarus died, not only had his soul to be separated from the body, but his body had to be purified from sin by being turned again into the dust of which it was made: therefore, so far as we know, Lazarus would die again after his having been raised, that his body might return unto dust, according to the original sentence pronounced against man in paradise. Not so CHRIST, whose flesh was not sinful, but only in the likeness of sinful flesh; and who, when by death He had shaken off the sin that was laid on Him, rose again, and could not any more

* Rom. vi. 6.

die, but liveth unto GOD for ever. He died because He had taken on Him the nature of man, and the sin of man : He liveth because He hath the nature of GOD and the holiness of GOD. He liveth, for He is GOD, and one with GOD ; as one who, having no sin, cannot die unless He layeth down his life of Himself. He liveth for the honour and glory of GOD ; He liveth because He hath taken away the sin and the curse from the children of Adam, and his glorified human nature is as Adam's was before the fall, except that it is infinitely superior. In that He liveth, He liveth unto GOD.

From the resurrection floweth our hope of salvation. "Blessed be the GOD and Father of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of GOD through faith unto salvation*." "JESUS CHRIST our Lord is the very Paschal Lamb which was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world: who by his death hath destroyed death, and by his rising to life again hath restored to us everlasting life." When the Jewish sacrifice had shed its blood, where was the proof that the blood had taken away sin? where was the proof that the life it had laid down was accepted, instead of the worshipper's own life? There was no proof that more blood was not needed, more lives demanded. There was no justification; no evidence that the sin of the worshipper was forgiven; no sentence coming forth from GOD that the sinner would be accounted righteous, and his guilt blotted out: for, in truth, the sin was not put

* 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

away, nor the sinner accounted righteous for the sake of any thing that had as yet been done. Far otherwise was it when JESUS died. Had He not really put away sin by his death? Then what further claim had death upon Him? If He had continued long in the prison of the grave, it would have shown that something more was required than the laying down of his life for sin,—something beyond his own sacrifice. Therefore He rose again from the dead, to show that the sacrifice was perfect, and sufficient, and accepted.

If CHRIST had not risen, our faith would have been vain,—all men must have died in their sins. Abraham was strong in faith,—and, therefore, it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and to us also it shall be imputed if we believe on Him that raised up JESUS our Lord from the dead: who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*. If CHRIST, our Surety, our Sacrifice, and our Head, had not been raised again from the dead, raised to eternal life, raised so as to die no more, raised so as to live unto God and with God for ever, how could we, (who have no claim to be accepted or accounted righteous before God, except for the merits' sake of JESUS CHRIST,) have hoped ourselves to rise again, or live for ever, or enter heaven, or dwell with God? But CHRIST hath once suffered for sins, the just instead of the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the SPIRIT: and He hath gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him†. And, therefore, our hope of salvation springs from being made partakers both of his death and of his resurrection: of that death

* Rom. iv. 25.

† 1 Pet. iii. 18, 22.

to which He was delivered, not for his own offences, but for ours; and of that resurrection by which the sentence of justification and acceptance was pronounced upon Him, not for Himself, who needed it not, but for us, who else could have had no hope. But now is CHRIST risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. If we have been planted with Him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection*. If when we were enemies we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life†; according to his own blessed promise before He yielded his soul to death for us,—“Because I live, ye shall live also‡.” “For He which raised up the Lord JESUS, shall raise up us also by JESUS§.” “And if the Spirit of Him that raised up JESUS dwell in us, He that raised up CHRIST from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us||.”

III. Lastly, the text explains to us the effect which the resurrection of CHRIST ought to have on our daily lives. “*Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” When we were admitted into the Covenant of CHRIST, and grafted into the body of his Church, there was required of us (or of our sureties), in order to our being baptized, a promise of repentance, whereby we should forsake sin, and of faith, whereby we should stedfastly believe the promises of God, made to us in that sacrament. Do you look for the inward spiritual grace of baptism, as pledged unto you in—as received through the means of—the outward visible sign which was so

* Rom. vi. 5.

† Rom. v. 10.

‡ John xiv. 19.

§ 2 Cor. iv. 14.

|| Rom. viii. 11.

administered unto you? If so, then examine yourselves, and see that you be expecting it only in the way which the Apostle points out to such as are baptized. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized unto JESUS CHRIST were baptized unto his death? Therefore we are buried with Him, by baptism, into death; that like as CHRIST was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*." "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him, through faith of (that is, through believing in) the operation of GOD, who hath raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross†." "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto GOD, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto GOD; for sin shall not have dominion over you. Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? Being made free from sin and become servants to GOD, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life‡." All this is signified by the inward and spiritual grace of baptism, viz., the death unto sin and the new birth unto righteousness; for it is

* Rom. vi. 3, 4.

† Col. ii. 12, 13, 14.

‡ Rom. vi. 12—22.

a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the HOLY GHOST, are visibly signed and sealed; faith is confirmed, and grace increased, by virtue of prayer unto God. It represents unto us our profession, which is to follow the example of our Saviour CHRIST, and to be made like unto Him; that as He died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin and rise again unto righteousness; continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living.

The lesson taught us (who are baptized unto CHRIST) by the resurrection is, death unto sin and newness of life.

The former part therefore is, that we should be, and should reckon ourselves to be, *dead unto sin*. The law of the Spirit of life in CHRIST JESUS hath made us free from the law of sin and death. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God: but ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of CHRIST, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness*." "We are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh; for if ye live after the flesh ye shall die, (that is, ye are occupying yourselves in that which will issue in death here and hereafter,) but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live:" live for ever, as children, heirs of God, and joint heirs with CHRIST. Therefore, said the LORD, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross

* Rom. viii. 8, 10.

and follow me*.” Put off concerning the former conversation (that is, as regards your former habits and ways,) the old man, or old nature, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man (or new character) which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. They that are CHRIST’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts; mortify, therefore, your members which are upon earth; that is, all the parts of your nature and character which concern this life only and have hitherto served sin and Satan rather than God. Walk in the Spirit (or spiritually) and fulfil not the lusts of the flesh. Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed; and these inward evils of every man’s own nature are the instruments which Satan uses to tempt us,—the armour and weapons with which in his strength he gains the victory over us. Let it be your prayer unto the GOD of all grace to grant that as you are baptized into the death of his blessed Son JESUS CHRIST, so by continually mortifying your corrupt affections you may be buried with Him, and that through the grave and gate of death, when your set hour shall have come, you may pass to your joyful resurrection, for his merit’s sake. In this present life, live as becometh those who are “prisoners of hope,” and have turned unto your strong hold even JESUS CHRIST, until the hour of your deliverance shall come. Let your fleshly nature be buried, as it were, in the grave of JESUS, never again to rise. Your pride, your evil heart of unbelief, your carnal mind, your corrupt affections, the divers lusts and passions which you have served, the sin which each one’s conscience knows doth so easily beset him,—leave them all in the sepulchre of CHRIST. Let death seize upon

* Matt. xvi. 24.

your sin and all your sinful inclinations and sinful habits. If you do not thus, how can you be dead unto sin and alive unto God? How shall you who are dead to sin live any longer therein? You profess and call yourselves Christians, that is, those who are one with CHRIST; hoping for salvation, for his sake, by partaking of his death and of his resurrection. What will it avail you to have escaped the pollutions and evil of the world through the knowledge of JESUS CHRIST, if you are again entangled therein and overcome by them? Will not the latter end be worse with you than the beginning? It had been better for you not to have known the way of righteousness, than after you have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto you*. Reckon ye, yourselves, therefore, to be dead indeed unto sin.

The other part of the lesson taught us by the Resurrection of our Lord is, that we should be, and should reckon ourselves to be, *alive unto God*. "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of JESUS CHRIST." "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all mannner of conversation." "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of CHRIST, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;" "who was manifest in these last days for you who by Him do believe in God that raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God†." Remember, that GOD made CHRIST to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. If

* 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.

† 1 Pet. i. 13, 21.

we profess and hope to have been planted together in the likeness of his death, (that is, to have become dead to sin,) we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection, that is, in holiness and newness of life. "If ye then be risen with CHRIST, (and if not, what is your hope of eternal life with Him?) seek those things which are above, where CHRIST sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with CHRIST in God. When CHRIST, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory*." How shall it be known that you are risen with CHRIST, if ye live and act as those who have fellowship still with the unfruitful works of darkness,—with sin, and worldliness, and evil; or if ye yield not yourselves to God and his service, as those that are alive from the dead? When the disciples went to the grave of their risen Lord, the angels said to them, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here but is risen†." Shall we be found as living among the ways of sin and spiritual death? Did not the Apostles declare unto us the gospel truths, that we might have fellowship with them? and their fellowship was with the Father and the Son. And this was their message,—That God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness (that is, in evil, and not in holiness,) we lie and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of JESUS his Son cleanseth us from all sin†. If, as we profess, we live in the Spirit, and draw all our spiritual life from Him, then let us walk

* Col. iii. 1—4.

† Luke xxiv. 5.

‡ 1 John i. 3—7.

in the Spirit, and seek that our dally lives may manifest the fruits of the Spirit, and thus shall we show forth the praises of Him who hath called us from darkness unto light. Desire and strive after all that which the Apostle prays for on behalf of Christians, "That the God of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints: and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which He wrought in CHRIST when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at his own right hand in heavenly places." "And you hath He quickened (or made alive) who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world." "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with CHRIST, (by grace are ye saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places (or heavenly things) in CHRIST JESUS*." Let your conversation be in heaven, from whence you look for the Saviour, the Lord JESUS CHRIST, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself†. Seek that ye may know Him and the power of his resurrection. True, this contest with sin and Satan will bring you trials and tribulation, more or less, in the world; but the Saviour saith, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome

* Ephes. i. 17, to ii. 6.

† Phil. iii. 20.

the world." He overcame through his death the prince of this world, who is judged and condemned for ever. He sendeth down the HOLY SPIRIT to quicken and guide us in body and soul: to rule in our hearts and endue us with holiness. The Son of GOD, dying for our sin, is our righteousness, and, risen to life again, is our life; and He sendeth spiritual life into our hearts, and hath left unto us his means of grace, his word, and sacraments. How precious are they! His body and his blood are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the LORD's Supper: and the outward and visible sign of the bread and wine shall be to them, who in faith receive them, a means whereby they receive the inestimable inward and spiritual grace, and a pledge to assure them thereof. If in true faith and repentance of heart thou hast received the creatures of bread and wine according to CHRIST's holy institution, then hast thou received the LORD into thine heart: feed on Him in thine heart by faith with thanksgiving. If in deadness to sin and in sorrow for all your evil life past—if in full purpose of amendment in time to come, in humble stedfast trust on the merits of his most precious death, and in full confidence upon his surpassing love and compassion, you are partakers of his holy communion, then do you indeed receive his body which was once broken for you,—his blood which was once shed for you,—broken and shed in a sacrifice that never can be repeated. Then have you received his body that GOD the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost may dwell in you; may endow you with grace, strengthen you against your enemies, and comfort you with their presence: may endow you with everlasting righteousness, and assure you of everlasting bliss and of the life of your soul. See, then, that you live as becometh those who are alive from the dead, and are par-

takers of CHRIST's resurrection; as those whose life and whose affections dwell in GOD; as those in whom GOD dwells by the HOLY SPIRIT. Pray that GOD, who through his only begotten Son, hath overcome death and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life, and who by his special grace going before you, putteth into your minds good desires, (and who among you can say that GOD has never so spoken to him by the voice of conscience within?) would grant you his continual help, that you may bring the same to good effect, to the honour and praise of his name, and the present peace and endless happiness of your souls, through the merits of JESUS CHRIST our Lord.

CONVERSION.

PREACHED ON THE "CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL," 1846.

BY THE

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GALATIANS i. 15, 16.

*It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb,
and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me,
that I might preach Him among the heathen.*

ST. PAUL here alludes to his wonderful conversion to the faith of CHRIST. The circumstances of that event are well known to us all. In early life he had both thought and acted very differently to his subsequent conduct, when GOD, having called him by His grace, had revealed His Son JESUS CHRIST in him. But GOD, who, though He has endowed reasonable man with such a will of his own, that he is entirely accountable for all which he does, and has it in his power to choose good and eschew evil, yet foreknows every thing from the very first, had separated him to be an Apostle from his mother's womb; that is, notwithstanding all his rage and madness, GOD, who overrules evil to good, and causes even the wicked to work out His own designs, had so ordered the circumstances of the Apostle Paul's life, as singularly to fit him for the office to which hereafter He called him.

By birth he was a Jew; after the most straitest sect of his religion, he lived a Pharisee, brought up at the

feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers. He was a very bitter persecutor of the Church of CHRIST, sinning ignorantly in unbelief. He verily thought with himself, that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of JESUS of Nazareth, and so he breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the LORD, and was exceedingly mad against them, persecuting them even unto strange cities.

But the day of God's power was at hand. He was journeying to Damascus with letters from the High Priest at Jerusalem to the authorities of that place, proposing to bring bound to Jerusalem any Christians whom he might find. But God purposed otherwise. Suddenly there shone round about him, and them that were with him, a bright light from Heaven, and St. Paul heard the voice of the Son of Man from the right hand of the throne of GOD asking him why he so persecuted Him. For CHRIST considers the treatment which the members of His body receive as done to Him. Paul persecuted Christians; CHRIST calls it persecuting *Him*.

The issue was, that the persecutor was changed in the purpose of his heart, and arising blind from the ground to which he had fallen, was led into Damascus with far other thoughts than he had imagined. There he remains fasting and humbling himself for three days, when a just man, named Ananias, was specially sent by GOD to admit him into the fold of CHRIST. And so, as we read, he arose and was baptized, and washed away his sins. And now being in CHRIST, he was a new creature; former things had passed away, and all had become new: he was transformed by the renewing of his mind. After a period of retreat in Arabia, where he was prepared by solitary contemplation, and by watching and

prayer; and by revelations from God Himself, for the work for which God designed him, he commenced his glorious course, and preached that Gospel which before he had blindly and madly laboured to overthrow. The grace of God, which was bestowed upon him, was not in vain, but he laboured more abundantly even than all the Apostles; yet (as he humbly says) “not I, but the grace of God, which was with me.”

Now this amazing history must needs be very instructive to us. One lesson of instruction is that which the Church draws from it. God said of St. Paul, that he was a chosen vessel unto Himself, to bear God's name before the Gentiles. He was the great Apostle of the Gentiles. To him, we ourselves probably at first owe (at least indirectly) that the light of CHRIST visited these shores. We ought therefore to have his wonderful conversion in remembrance, and show forth our thankfulness to God for the same, by following the holy doctrine which St. Paul taught.

And much besides this, tending to edification, we might well learn from the events of which we have been speaking. But I wish now to speak in particular of that, which is called *conversion*;—what it is not, and what it is,—to warn you, if it please God, against some erroneous notions on this subject which are not uncommon, and to help both myself and you in the examination of ourselves, as to whether a real conversion be indeed ours.

The strict and most proper meaning of *conversion* is when a man is converted from a false religion to that which is the only true one; when a heathen (for instance) throws away his idols of wood and stone to the moles and to the bats, repents earnestly of all his sins, believes on the name of the Lord JESUS, receives

Christian baptism for the remission of his sins, and is admitted into the society of CHRIST's Church, and made a fellow-heir with the saints of the glorious inheritance, which CHRIST has purchased for His disciples by His blood. Such a man is said to be converted to CHRIST, or to the Gospel, or to CHRIST's religion. Conversion means a *turning*, and so a *change*. And such a man is turned away from his former idolatries and sins, and changed from a child of wrath and a servant of the Devil, into one of those believers unto whom the kingdom of heaven was opened. Such a conversion was that of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, after St. Peter's sermon, when they, who gladly received his word, were baptized. Such a conversion was that of the Ethiopian eunuch, who believed with all his heart, that JESUS CHRIST was the Son of GOD, and went down into the water, and was baptized by Philip, and then went on his way rejoicing. Such a conversion was that of the jailor at Philippi, who believed on the Lord JESUS CHRIST unto salvation, and took Paul and Silas the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. Such a conversion, that is, a turning from his former unbelief, and a change to the Gospel of CHRIST, and a reception by GOD as a child of grace in baptism, was that of St. Paul, when the Son of GOD was revealed in him, enlightening his whole soul, so that CHRIST (as it were) spoke within him. And such, though differing in degrees, as the true faith is received with greater or less earnestness, must all conversions be in those countries where the doctrine of JESUS CHRIST is first preached.

What, then, is meant by conversion in Christian countries, where the children of Christian parents are baptized in infancy, before they have any self-conscious-

ness of their own;—where infants are admitted into the congregation of CHRIST's Church, as into the Ark, that they may pass safe through the waves of this troublesome world, before they are of an age to discern between good and evil, before they can consciously renounce the latter and choose the former? Such has been the case with every one of us, and is there, then, no conversion which we need? Yes, most certainly it is necessary that a change pass over every one, which we may in effect call a conversion, if a man would hope hereafter to see God and dwell with Him for ever. The child, who was baptized in infancy, must needs be daily renewed by the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD. He must, as he grows in years, grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. He must at any time be quite different from what a heathen child of the same years would be: so that you may say, one is a Christian and the other is not, one is converted and the other is not. He was placed, when in tender years, in the fold of CHRIST, and his heart was pre-occupied by the presence of the HOLY SPIRIT; but, as his own will and his own reason show themselves, it must be the care of those to whose hands God has entrusted him,—it must be the care of his Christian parents and his Christian friends to cherish the good seed sown,—to teach him to recognize and to follow the motions of the good Spirit of God within him,—to fight against that evil nature which in its tendencies remains with him, as in every child of Adam, even though he be regenerate,—to train him up in that profession, which his baptism represented, and of which it was the beginning, “to follow the example of our Saviour CHRIST in all things, and to be made like unto Him.” And whenever a child so grows up in the fear and nurture of the LORD, such an one is most truly con-

verted. By the charitable work of others, favourably allowed by God, he was in his early years of unconsciousness converted from being a child of wrath to a child of grace,—a child to whom grace was even then given, and more covenanted and promised according to his growing needs. He was translated into the kingdom, or church, of God's dear Son. And in after years, that conversion has been carried on, himself co-operating with all that had been done by others, and so he grows to the full stature of the perfect man in CHRIST JESUS.

But yet again, a third meaning of conversion is derived from the sad facts of the destroying power of sin within the Church as well as without. Suppose the baptized infant, of whom I just now was speaking, instead of being brought up to fear God by holy parents, to have fallen into the hands of a father and mother who care not for God. They do not encourage the good seed sown, and so it never springs up, but remains, putting forth no blessed shoots of grace, bound up in the frozen heart. Or perhaps, the friends of the child, though they may have some sort of fear of God themselves, yet are sinfully careless to rule their households well, and are like Eli, whose sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. Or perhaps, the child himself has not been careful, when he knew how, to seek after God, and to strengthen his heart against sin: for after all, the most careful education will never supply the lack of individual watchfulness. Others may put us in the way of being holy, but they cannot be holy for us; we must fight the Christian fight ourselves, in our own persons. And so the child has fallen, when the hour of temptation came, and has grieved the HOLY SPIRIT whereby he was sealed.

In any case the sad result, alas! only too common, is

the same; and from whatever cause, he who when young was received into CHRIST's Church, and was blessed by Him who took young children into His arms, has not persevered in that grace; but like that Prodigal Son, has gone into a far country, and wasted the substance which God had given him in riotous living. And is there, then, for such an one no hope? God forbid we should say so. Even in that far land to which he has gone, and where at last he has been set to feed swine, even there, if he will remember his Father's house, and will return, saying in hearty repentance and sorrowful confession, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," there is yet pardon and acceptance for this miserable prodigal. He may yet save his soul alive. Now such a repentance as this is also called conversion, because it is indeed a change from wicked and evil ways to an entire surrender of the man, heart and soul, to God. It is indeed the converting one, who had forgotten God, whether he had been sensual, or proud, or worldly, or careless; whether outwardly decent, as far as man's customs go, or whether an offender against the laws of both God and man, it is the converting such an one, by the grace of God, to the presentation of himself a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is every one's reasonable service. Better far would it have been for a man never so to have fallen, but from childhood upwards to have grown up, like Samuel, in the courts of the LORD, ministering unto Him. But yet, if we have sinned against our baptism, and alas how many have done so! let us at least, by a true and sincere repentance, turn unto GOD now, kneeling penitently at the foot of CHRIST's Cross, and beseeching Him to have mercy on us. Such a prayer as that we need not doubt He will answer; and when we can

look with abhorrence on sins in which we once took pleasure, and have learnt to love God and to keep His commandments, and are indeed constrained by the love of CHRIST, and can desire what God promises, and delight ourselves in prayer and praise, in holy communion, in God's Word, in holy living, in holy company, in thoughts of a holy heaven hereafter, then are we too converted, such a mighty change has passed over us.

But we cannot take the Conversion of St. Paul and apply it in all its special circumstances to our own. We cannot say, as some do, that a man must be a great sinner before he is a great saint, forgetting that St. Paul never was a licentious, immoral man, but a strict though a blind Jew, sinning (as he tells us) ignorantly in unbelief. We cannot insist that in every case there must needs be some sudden and instantaneous change, caused by some violent emotion, bursting on the heart like that flood of light above the brightness of the sun which struck down St. Paul.

The Conversion of St. Paul differs from any which ordinarily can happen among us in several particulars, and we must not ignorantly take its letter rather than its spirit, and apply it to ourselves.

It was different in its *mode*. This is at once plain, if you will remember the miraculous circumstances which accompanied it. I fear, brethren, if we dare to remain in sin until a miracle be vouchsafed to turn us from the wickedness of our ways, we shall never be converted at all, but must sink down and down into the bottomless pit, and our damnation will be just.

St. Paul's conversion was different in its *subject*. He who was converted was under different circumstances from those of any who fondly look to be converted like him; for he was no Christian, but a bigoted Jew, and so had

never been under the influences of CHRIST's Church, of which he was not a member. Ananias was specially sent to baptize him, that his sins might be washed away. But we, brethren, have been baptized long ago; we have been under all the influences which the Church of CHRIST places about us these many years past; we have had instruction, prayer, Holy Communion, the Bible,—all these, and more, constantly before us, if even we have not chosen to take a part in them. St. Paul thought he was doing GOD service in persecuting Christians; he sinned ignorantly, and so, though he sinned, he kept a good conscience; but who among us who needs repentance and conversion can say that he knows not that he is doing wrong when he sins; who thinks he is doing GOD service by his wicked life?

And again, the *object* proposed in St. Paul's conversion was different from that of ordinary cases among ourselves; for he was not simply called to the light of Christianity, but he was called to be an Apostle, and to preach the Son of GOD among the heathen. "I have appeared unto thee," said our Lord to him, "for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen and of those in the which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto GOD, and that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in Me."

But yet, brethren, though none of us can expect a miracle to be worked for his conversion;—though such changes are gradual rather than sudden, like the growth of the corn,—the seed, the blade, the full corn in the ear;—though there is no more baptism for us, where

like St. Paul we may totally wash away all our sins;—though we are called rather to the duties of common life, and to the glorifying God by a holy walk and conversation among our neighbours, than separated like St. Paul to be apostles;—yet after all, conversion, by which I mean that entire change of heart which marks the new creation of God in CHRIST JESUS, must sooner or later be ours. We, too, like St. Paul, must count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS. It is not a sudden stroke, for which we must look, once over and the work then done; but it is the being transformed to a temper like that of St. Paul, who for all he had done, and for all God's grace had done in him, yet rested not;—who considered not himself already perfect, but followed after,—who forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are before, pressed toward the mark of the prize of his high calling of God in CHRIST JESUS.

THE WAY TO COMFORT UNDER TRIAL.

BY THE

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ROMANS VIII., part of ver. 28.

*We know that all things work together for good to them
that love God.*

WHILE it is true of all holy Scripture that it is *given by inspiration of GOD, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of GOD may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*, it is certain that the value of some portions of the Bible is more clearly seen by our eyes than the value of others; and that in that storehouse of remedies for man's disease which is opened to us in the Gospel there are some balsams, to which we have recourse again and again, as having tried and in some sort experienced their efficacy. Now, throughout the entire compass of God's Word, perhaps there is no chapter fuller of materials to excite our gratitude than that from which the text is taken; summing up, in short, as it doth, all that comfort and instruction which is otherwise scattered through the remaining parts of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Almost every verse in this chapter will, at the first glance, lay open something of its preciousness to the thoughtful Christian. Much of the gold lies near to the surface; so that we have not need to dig for it.

With regard to the words that have been read, these would be most effectually discoursed upon, if by any means, through God's working, they could be engraven on our hearts. The recollection of the simple text must be, to all that will receive it with faith, not simply comfort unspeakable under every outward affliction, but also an encouragement to holiness and the love of God, which (if we profit by it) will be found to grow in strength as we go forward in life; and of the truth of which Christians cannot fail to find repeated confirmations within the limits of their own experience.

We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

Join with me, I entreat you, in earnest prayer to our Almighty Father, that we may have grace to receive these words with a childlike reliance on the truth of Him by whose inspiration they first were written, that we may be enabled to recall them to our memories in every season of difficulty and of sorrow.

You see that the Apostle speaks as one who had distinct and certain knowledge of the grounds whereupon he was standing. He says *we know*. It is not every one that hath this happy assurance within himself. It is one thing coldly to assent to a doctrine, another and a very different thing practically to realize in our souls the truth of that doctrine. St. Paul knew this, and every experienced Christian, as I doubt not, knows also that all things work together for good to them that love God. But faith is required, and oftentimes no small measure of faith, to enable the soul firmly to rest on a truth like that before us,—a truth which is not at once apparent to the bodily senses. If, for example, you were to tell a worldly-wise man of the happiness of a Christian as such, will he not look upon your assertion

perhaps as the mere raving of enthusiasm; or, atleast, doth he not feel that such happiness is not the happiness for which he can venture everything that he counts most dear? But this resolved knowledge which the Apostle owns in the text is one upon which, without doubting, he is glad to risk his all. It is a knowledge fruitful in spiritual courage and godly perseverance; and though in outward things they who possess it may see the earth removed and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea, yet their heart is not shaken, nor have they reason to distrust the wisdom of their venture; for *GOD is their refuge and their strength,—a very present help in time of trouble.*

We know that all things work together for good to them that love GOD. This expression *all things* is very large, and it may perhaps be taken in its fullest sense; for we might go over all those matters with which we have anything to do, and shew that all work together for the good of God's people.

All the attributes of GOD are engaged in their behalf, all GOD's works minister to their welfare, all GOD's Word, yea (if we may say it without irreverence), GOD's very thoughts and purposes, are for their real and lasting good. CHRIST is on their side; the HOLY SPIRIT helps them, and intercedes in their behalf; the dispensations of Providence are ordained with reference to their weal. The promises, the mercies, the very threatenings of GOD, all are for the everlasting good of such as will be wise betimes, and profit by that grace which He freely offers to each amongst ourselves for our perfection.

And perhaps we might without error lead you into a yet more mysterious course of meditation, and we should be borne out in saying that all evil, yea sin itself, the root of all misery, is overruled by the infinite wisdom

and power of the Most High for the good of his people. Not indeed that sin of itself can work any good either for time or for eternity. Sin is the cause of every ill; sin works shame and sorrow, terror and torment. But there is One who can bring light out of darkness, good out of evil; and even this, the most terrible of all evils, sin may work good to them that love God; for Satan and his temptations, if rightly met, bring men to CHRIST, and all the believer's wants and weaknesses force upon him the necessity of clinging more closely to his Saviour, of throwing himself more unreservedly upon CHRIST's grace.

But I suppose that this expression *all things* is in the text rather to be taken of all outward circumstances, whether they seem to bring sorrow or joy. It is said in verse 26, *We know not what we should pray for as we ought*; and when we are under affliction, we know not whether it be best for us to be delivered from our sorrow or to remain as we are; but the SPIRIT of GOD *helpeth our infirmities*, disposeth us to submit to GOD's pleasure, GOD's wisdom, and the loving exercise of our Father's power; and *He that searcheth the hearts knoweth* that, by the gracious influences of the HOLY GHOST, we, if we are truly GOD's children, are upon the whole disposed to submit to GOD's choice, however trying some special afflictions may appear for the moment to be; seeing that however this or that may turn out, still we know and are assured that *all things work together for good to them that love GOD*.

For their *good*; not for this or that particular good, not for their good according to their own notions, or the notions of their fellow men, but for that which is good for them in the judgment of GOD himself, for their real, spiritual, and lasting good. Whatsoever may lead to their being good, or doing good, while upon earth, what-

soever may fit them for their inheritance among the Saints in light, *this* is the end of God's working in them, and to *this* all shall be directed. Whatsoever doth not lead to *this* is, in fact, no good at all; men may as well, or better, be without it; but whatsoever may contribute towards their obtaining *this* is truly good, however different the guise in which it may sometimes appear to our view. If then we be lovers of God, and if riches concur to this end of making us holy and unblamable before Him, we shall be rich; if poverty shall rather further this end we shall be poor; if it be really well for us that we enjoy health and lightness of spirits, we shall have health and full springs of present gladness within; but if it be better for us that we be tried by sickness, or sorrow, or losses of whatsoever is most dear to us, sickness, sorrow, and bereavement will assuredly come to work in us this good will of God to our souls. Every thing that happens, happens well; the best that may be; it is wisely ordered by our all-powerful, all-loving Father and Lord.

And doubtless it is the firm assurance of this truth which supports many weak believers, under that confusion which seems to reign in the present distribution of what are called the good things of this life. These are scattered, as it were, upon the good and the bad promiscuously; all things, as it would seem at first sight, come alike to all, and we can never know by their outward condition the sinner from the saint. The worst of men may flourish in the world, living in ease and plenty, and reputation among his neighbours, while the sincere follower of CHRIST may be dragging on his existence in destitution, in affliction, in contempt. This, indeed, only regards the outward appearances of things: could we look within, we should find even now a very different

history, and perhaps a mere heathen could tell us, that the seat of happiness is not in outward circumstances, but in the soul; that what limits happiness is the measure which the soul takes of that which is essential for her good, and that the spirit in which we meet the struggles of life is, in fact, that which constitutes the happiness of man. But to the Christian, even where outward circumstances cross the wishes of the soul, and when he finds disappointment in that wherein he looked for peace, still there is a region of shelter and security provided, wherein troubles never dwell. It is this condition which is spoken of in the text,—*We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.*

To them that love God:—are we such? This is the most important question that can be asked of us now, however coldly some of us may now listen to it; on the answer we may be able to give to it with truth, depends our destiny at the last. But *what is it to love God*? We have read the writings of some of those who professed to love God, which writings seemed to place the sum of religion in the warmth and liveliness of the affections, but the love of God cannot be judged of by our own notions of the inward frame and temper of our spirits; we love Him as a child may love his parent when he fears to offend him, when he reverently regards in all things his will, and when in the very act of obedience he finds his reward. And there is no other scriptural test of our love to God, except our careful respect unto his revealed word. *If ye love me*, said CHRIST to his disciples, *keep my commandments*. And so writes the beloved Disciple,—*This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments*. It is not enough then to imagine that we have the love of CHRIST in our hearts. It is not enough to be ready to protest with St. Peter,—*Lord, thou knowest all things, thou*

knowest that I love thee; but our love must be tried by its fruits. There is something to be done for its evidence, as CHRIST enjoined that on his Apostle three several times, when he made Him this reply,—*Feed my lambs,—Feed my sheep.* That is, Prove that you love me by your devotion to my work. Now what have we done for CHRIST and for GOD? What have we given up for GOD as the proof of our devotion? Our love must be practical, operative, working. We have heard of men, of whom it may be almost said, that they seem to have considered their inward feelings to have been excuses for their outward actions, but the true Christian is no such speculative dreamer. His whole life is action, yea, fighting in the service of his Lord. It is not then what we may fancy to be the affection of love in the heart, much less is it merely the profession of love on the tongue, but the deeds of love in our life and conduct, which are in effect the touchstone of our sincerity.

But further, it may well be, that some of those who hear of this love to GOD, as being absolutely necessary to the realization of our Christian profession, will be discouraged. They may be sensible that they do not love GOD as they ought, that GOD is not in all their thoughts, that they do not value communion with Him, that they do not find that delight which they feel they are encouraged to find in his word. If, then, it be asked, How am I to love GOD? one answer to such a question would be, “By setting yourself continually to think over with prayer that which GOD tells you in the Bible He has done and is doing for your sake: by considering that when you were without strength, helpless in your sins, the Son of GOD came down from heaven, and lived here a life of suffering, and finally died in torment on the cross, to save your soul: by remembering that your

Saviour is continually seeking after you as a shepherd seeketh after a sheep that is lost, endeavouring to lead you to Himself, and to secure your purity and happiness: by realising to your spirit the truth that GOD offers now to be your ever-present helper and friend, and hereafter to satisfy every desire of your heart." But further, this scriptural doctrine of action being the test of love, may supply us with other hints that shall prove serviceable to our souls. We may find it difficult to love GOD, but at least it is not difficult to determine that we will act from principles of love to our brethren: *he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* Especially are we bound to act in a spirit of love towards those who are more immediately dependent upon us: *what we are in our families, that we are in truth.*

If, then, there be a master who takes no care of his household, who neglects the spiritual advantage of his servants, who remembers not that he also hath a master in heaven, what judgment must be formed of him? If there be a parent who is not careful of his temper and conduct towards his children, who is not anxiously striving to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the LORD; does he love them in sincerity, as immortal beings, whose welfare for ever must in a great measure depend upon the treatment they receive at his hands? If there be a husband who behaves harshly towards the wife of his bosom, not cherishing her nor giving honour to her as the weaker vessel, nor endeavouring to repay with the tenderest affection one who has given up so much for his sake, will not his vows hereafter be remembered in judgment against him? Can a profession of love to GOD be aught else than a mockery from such lips? Every voluntary action strengthens the

principle in which that action originated: Christian feelings nourish one another, and a great means by which we may cherish our love to God is to begin with cherishing love to our brethren.

Some of the great masters in practical religion have recommended us never to enter into converse with any one or into society, without offering up silent prayers for the welfare, the true welfare of those with whom we may happen to come into contact, and doubtless many have in this way been benefited by those of whom they never thought, and it is not till they meet in heaven that the saints recognize the blessings that attend upon their communion, each with every other member of CHRIST'S body, partakers of a common hope, and waiting servants upon a common Lord. But more than this we may well do; we may without any ostentation never enter into conversation or society without a silent hope and desire to be directed aright, so as to prove the causes of permanent blessings to those with whom we have intercourse. This will not be done by putting ourselves out of our place, by taking upon ourselves, uncommissioned, the office of the reprover and the corrector of those about us, by in any way suffering a self-righteous spirit to bear rule in our souls. *No one who is sincere in his endeavours after self-amendment, will suspect half so much cause for blame in others as he knows of within himself.* But what I have recommended may be done by our silent example, by a constant recollection of God's presence, by bearing it in mind, that however unworthy we are in ourselves, GOD hath ordained that we should be the lights of the world, the salt of the earth. *What I have recommended will be done by those who are assiduous in prayer, that they may unite the wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove.*

If we are really seeking to do good to others, we shall never be at a loss for the means; and such good done for GOD's sake, will cherish within us that pure spirit of love, which rising up from the creature to the Creator as its object, shall fill us at the last with immeasurable, never-ending joy.

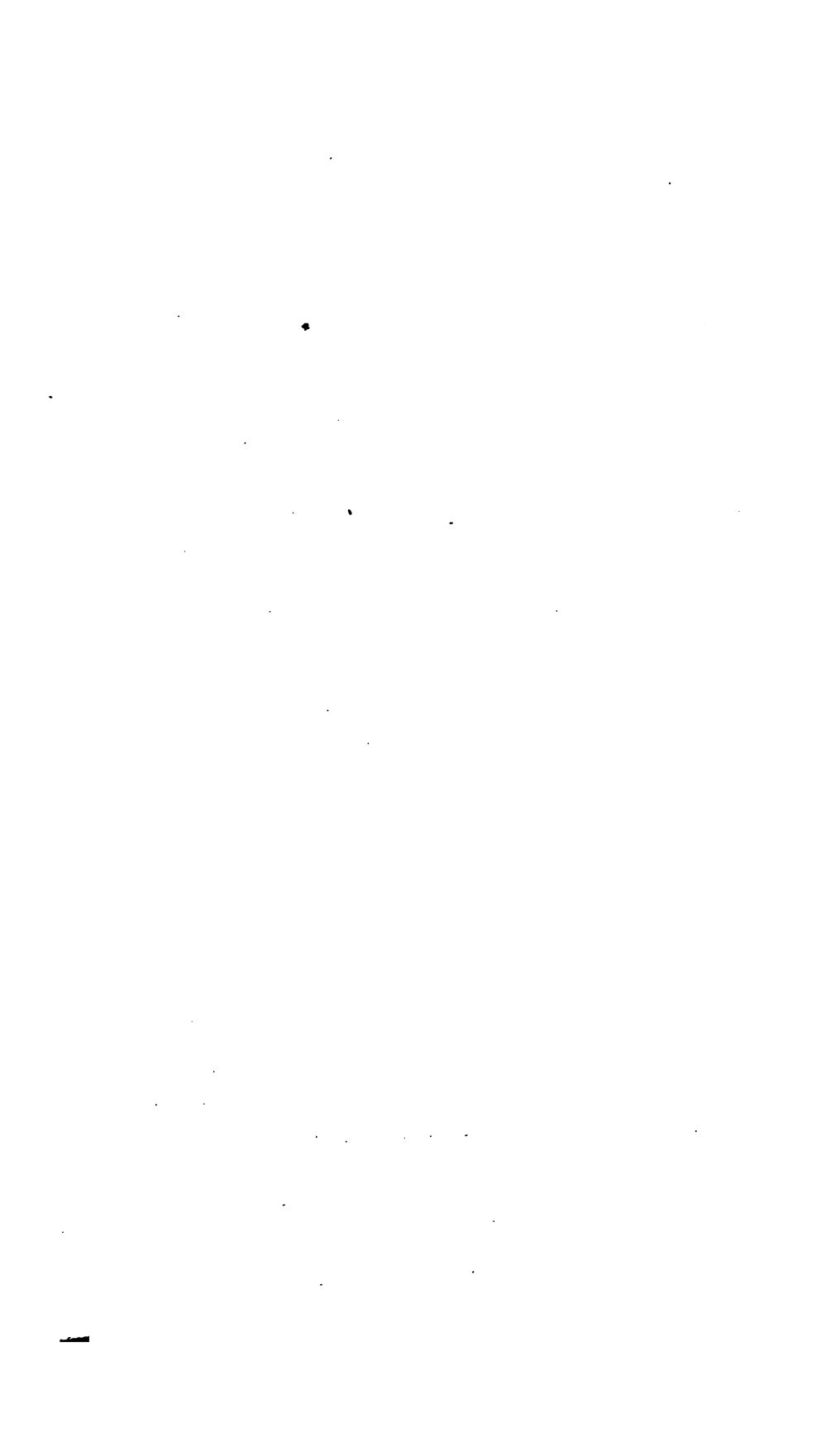
But we must take for a moment the other side of the picture. Are there any here who are not lovers of GOD, and who are not struggling to love GOD, and can it be said of such that all things work together for their good? Rather we must say, that *so long as these continue obstinate in their sin, all things work together for their misery*. All their comforts will be reckoned against them; all their talents misapplied do but increase their condemnation. Their health doth but encourage them to boldness in sin, their friends and avocations prove so many inlets to temptation, and their perishing enjoyments, which slip day by day and hour by hour out of their grasp, do but blind their souls to their pitiable condition, and steal away their thoughts from GOD. Yes, and it is sad to say what is nevertheless true of such, that their very sorrows and pains shall be counted against them; for *affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground*, but all our sufferings are sent to us by GOD with a merciful design, to wean our hearts from earthly good, and to teach us that our treasure is above. If we love not GOD, and love not his Son, our seeming blessings prove in effect our real curses, our riches are corrupted, our garments are moth-eaten, our gold and silver is cankered, and the rust shall be a witness against us, and eat into our flesh as it were fire. They are the words of CHRIST, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great command-*

ment. And St. Paul goes yet further: *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha, i. e., let him abide under the heaviest curse.*

But are we seeking that we may love God? Then let us strive to shew our love by our obedience, and assuredly grace shall rest upon our endeavours, and what was once difficult shall prove easy; and as we go on in life, by sweet and happy experience we shall realise the assurance here given us by the Apostle, and we shall find that all things work together for our good. No evil can in that case befall us. *They who seek the LORD* (not they who find the LORD, for who then could apply the promise to himself? but it is written that) *They who seek the LORD shall want no manner of thing that is good.* In some sort all things are theirs; they may have nothing as the world judges, and yet in truth they possess all things, life and death, things present and things to come, all are theirs, if they are CHRIST'S, and CHRIST is GOD'S.

Here, then, are blessing and cursing plainly set before us. Choose you which shall be your portion, or rather let us join heartily in prayer to Him who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, beseeching Him that He will choose for us, that He will so influence the desires of our hearts, that we may love the things which He commands, and desire that which He doth promise; so amongst the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts shall surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found, and our affections rightly set upon things above, every wish formed by our hearts shall find its satisfaction complete either here or hereafter. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.*

NOTE.—Some of the thoughts in the above sermon are taken from Bishop W. Cowper's Exposition of the chapter, from Bishop Brownrigge, and from Bishop Beveridge's Sermon on the text.



THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

BY THE

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I. TIMOTHY I. 16.

*Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first
Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a
pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him
to life everlasting.*

LITTLE did the parents and guardians who gave St. Paul the careful education he received foresee the issue of it. He seems to have belonged to one of the strictest Jewish families; he was the son of a Pharisee, circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; born, indeed in a Greek city, but brought up at Jerusalem, at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers. His life from his youth was at the first among his own nation at Jerusalem, and passed, it would seem, in such circumstances as to make him well known to the chief men of his nation. He profited in the Jews' religion above many his equals in age, and in the strictest sect of that religion he lived a Pharisee. Nor was his religion merely a matter of education, or of hereditary influence, or of intellectual assent. He was eminently a zealot, "zealous toward God," he says to his persecutors, "as ye all are this day," "being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers." Perhaps he was one of those whom

the Jews designated as zealots, as Simon the apostle was another—men, who,—after the pattern of Phineas, their alleged founder,—were ready, with hand and deed as well as word and speech, to do and suffer in the cause of their nation and their God. This attachment of Saul to the Jewish cause was not a mere narrow-minded prejudice, but the deliberate choice of a man that had taken a wide survey of the world around him, and knew what other attracting influences were abroad, and how the mighty and the wise regarded his countrymen. His birth at Tarsus gave him the privileges of a Roman citizen, and ambition might have induced him to strive after a place in the system of that mighty empire. Never was it more imposing than now, when, after the contests of rival factions and centuries of opposition, it had finally established itself in unquestioned dominion over the nations, and was preparing for its ages of rule, for its mighty works of peace, for the moulding of the nations into its own character, and for the triumphs of its law and language. If thus we conjecture what, with his energy and courage, he might have been among the Romans, as a soldier or a politician, we may conclude more certainly, that he might have entered with success on that other most inviting field, opened to him in the philosophy of the Greeks. We see that he was acquainted with their literature; often, no doubt, had he been tempted to betake himself to Athens, to master those truths which its wise men professed to have made their own; he, too, felt in himself a longing to grapple with the problems which have ever exercised the highest minds; he, too, felt a capacity for dealing with the questions which concern the attainment of the Supreme Good—the rule of life, the origin of evil, and the nature of the soul. These beckoned him towards vaunting Greece.

Yet he saw cause for clinging, in spite of the sneers of the refined, to the despised teaching of his fathers' house. He saw that there was no heart, no spirituality in Roman power; that it was earthly, not heavenly; so he chose to cast in his lot with the conquered, not with the conqueror, trusting one day to see the tide of empire turned. He saw that there was no authority, no certainty, in Greek speculation; that it availed not to arrest vice, or to stay the degeneracy and effeminacy of their nation; that it was more and more passing off into mere contests of words and names; that it was of man, not of God. What were these dreams, and disputations, and abstractions to the living personal God of his fathers? What was the Roman empire to the Jewish theocracy? Doubtless he clung more closely to the traditions of his country from his knowledge of the heartlessness, hollowness, and unreality of all besides: old religions were worn out and losing their hold. Surely at that above all periods must many a Jew have felt that the time of his nation was next to come; that the spiritual sceptre of the world must soon be resigned into their hands; that it wanted but a word from heaven, and they were ready at the sword's point to proclaim—"There is but one God, and Moses is his prophet." And yet, with truth in their hands, and prophecy exciting the most glowing expectations, Saul and other thinking men must have felt that they were very weak, divided amongst themselves, partially corrupted by Gentile manners, trodden down by the Romans. To earnest Jews, who flocked up to Jerusalem from a distance full of reverence and loyalty, how miserable must have seemed the gross hypocrisy and polluted lives of the rulers—men that could hardly themselves believe their own system, could not be earnest for it, fight or die for it. But Saul was not

one of these. He seems to have been a man of blameless life, striving after the righteousness of the law, thinking it within his grasp, ever expecting to attain it, ever surprised at his own failures—surprised, but not humbled, not yet seeing the law in its awful and high strictness, not yet seeing the need of being *in* another in order to stand before GOD. He knew not yet his need of mercy; and not knowing the love of GOD, he knew little of love to man. He knew not of a common misery, a common deliverance, a common interest in a new brotherhood—of the one body, one spirit, one heart, one mouth. Still GOD seemed to dwell at a distance from those who were not his children but his servants; and man had not yet gained his value and honour in his brother's eye from the exaltation of humanity in CHRIST. Thus Saul became a persecutor—that is, because he was proud and unloving, and because men were yet, as men, unhonoured in his sight. What darker shades were mingled in his character, whether personal pique at being defeated in argument by St. Stephen, or love of power, had hardened his heart, we know not. Certainly, he looked back to this time as a time of madness; spoke of himself as afterwards not fit to be called an apostle, as the chief of sinners, as less than the least of all saints, because he had persecuted, blasphemed, insulted; and surely we must take a severe view of his conduct. He breathed out slaughter more like a beast than a man, when he was even fresh from the sight of the calm sufferings of the blessed Stephen. He was probably guilty of suborning men, and setting on false witnesses. At best he was a melancholy spectacle of human perversity, setting itself counter to the intentions of GOD—a sad contrast to the humble-minded who had been easily and peaceably transferred from the Synagogue to the Church,

to John Baptist, and Simeon, and Anna, and the blessed Virgin, and the holy Apostles: for here was a man in the pride of human learning reading quite a wrong lesson from the law: prizing the type, and rejecting the anti-type; strenuous for the resurrection of the dead, and yet denying that which alone made it possible; zealous for the law, and yet refusing that which could alone enable others, or even himself, to keep it; professing to love God at a distance, and yet, when He was come near, hating Him; ready to curse the Gentiles, when God would that they should be blessed; thinking to love his nation, and yet its worst enemy; zealous for a CHRIST of his own imagining, and persecuting the actual CHRIST; destroying the souls of them he won, and weaving a crown of life for those whom he overwhelmed with death. What darkness and contradiction were about him! Doubtless, he felt something of this in his own heart. The angel face or meek prayer of Stephen would trouble him; a report of the Apostle's courage, or a trace of the Saviour's goodness, would make an impression on him; the awful hypocrisy of his leaders would startle him; or some interpretation of the ancient rabbins would perplex him; or the weakness of his own resolutions, and the deterioration of his own character, would disturb him; but onward he rushed into action headlong, to escape from himself, and would no doubt have, year by year, grown harder and coarser, more deaf to conscience, lowering his standard to his practice, and catching the tone of those with whom he acted, obliged to suppress Jewish truth in order to weaken its testimony for Christianity, till at length he would have been one of the bloody fanatics who prowled about in the last days of the possessed city; or would have become a cold, worldly, bitter sceptic; miserably sneering at the enthusiasm of

his own youth, and disbelieving in virtue because he had so often prevailed over it. But the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant; for this cause he obtained mercy, that in him first CHRIST JESUS might shew forth all long-suffering, and therefore to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise GOD, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. Gently was he dealt with; few were the words of upbraiding, with far more of grief than of anger. The message was plainly sent to him alone, for the men that were with him understood not the voice. He was known by name, separated from his mother's womb. At the very first he was told, that he might look for more than bare forgiveness—that for him was prepared the honour of being a minister and a witness—that he should be delivered in danger—should open eyes as his own were now opened—should turn men as he was himself now turned—should preach that forgiveness of sins, the sweetness of which he was about to taste, that sanctification of which, in his better moments, he had caught a glimpse.

The LORD was merciful to him, but he could not be merciful to himself: three days was he without food, in solitude and darkness of mind and body. What a work was going on in these three days!—a reversing of every judgment he had formed, an entire revolution in all his feelings. The dead then was alive; the crucified was glorified; the CHRIST had come, and he had insulted the Lord of Glory; he had been doing Satan's work, and had brought *that* blood on his head. Where was now his righteousness? Where was his self-exaltation above others? He felt himself the vilest wretch that ever crawled on the earth. Where was now his high proficiency in the law,—his subtle arguments,—his convincing demonstrations? The fabric of his mind seemed

swept away, the labour of a life gone; he must begin again as a little child. "It shall be told thee what thou must do." "Witness of those things wherein I shall appear unto thee." He longed for these promised communications; and yet would flesh and blood be able to bear them? How had he borne that light above the light of the sun; that voice not of earth though human; that countenance as of one born of woman and yet the LORD God? In those three days he lived many ordinary years: the aroused spirit coursed through the history of his life; the subterfuges of past pretexts were pierced through and through; the depths of his heart sounded, and its mystery drawn up: now he knew his disease, now he saw the cause of his past weakness and misery; he longed to be absolved, to be released from the burthen which till now he had not felt, but which had always been part of himself: he dared to desire to be washed in the blood he had despised; to be united to Him from whom he had fled; to be acknowledged by the Most Holy in the righteousness of Him whom now he saw to be the alone righteous. In his darkness and solitude he lay, seemingly unable to find his way to Him who had laid his hand of power on him; but he prayed; and again the hand was put out, but now it was the hand of healing. One called him Brother—one whom God only could have acquainted with his private vision. He felt hands laid on him; and the pierced hands he had seen on the road, they too were over him; and he heard of the HOLY GHOST, and the unclosing of his bodily eyes was but a token of a spiritual enlightenment; the water of baptism touched him, and the blood that had flowed from that side was mingled with it: his sins were washed away, and he was filled with the HOLY GHOST; and he heard again that he was to bear witness, and it was sweet to

think he could do aught for Him. How did he marvel, when he had power to think of the change that had passed upon him; of the difference three days had made; —a death, a burial, a resurrection, and now a new life; Heaven his; the CHRIST his; the justification he had toiled for; the peace that passeth understanding; the witness in himself; the self-evidencing truth; the key that fitted all the wards of his heart; strength in weakness; joy in sorrow; love in fear and confidence with humility; his own mysterious soul assured as to its connexion with God; his place in the universe found; his work assigned; the knowledge of God not impossible; the perfecting of his nature not unattainable; life proved to be worth living; man immortal and yet blest.

And now at last, when he began to know the new man within him, and the new world to which he henceforth belonged, he learned that he had not really parted with anything that had been dear to his better nature: his nationality was expanded into catholicity; his desire for uniformity was more than gratified, for he found a spiritual unity of which he had not dreamed; the truths of the Pharisees were more than probable, they were proved; the God of his fathers had indeed remembered Abraham; the Roman empire was indeed to be superseded; Greek philosophy was indeed to be replaced by an authoritative sentence; "There is but one God," was indeed to be carried to the end of the earth by the sword of the SPIRIT; heathenism was indeed ready for death, and Judaism had brought forth its slayer; he was not wrong in casting his lot with God's people; he was not wrong in being a zealot; not wrong in proselyting; not wrong in going to foreign cities; he should go still, furnished with authority, not from a mock High Priest, but the true; not to bring men's bodies bound into an

earthly, but their spirits captive into a heavenly Jerusalem; not with an arm of flesh, but with other and more potent weapons; not by persecuting, but by being persecuted; though free from all men, he should make himself servant to all; his love for his countrymen should be neither extinguished nor extinguishable; he should be a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men; solitary, but not desolate; infirm, but glorying in infirmities; when reviled, should bless; when persecuted, suffer it; when defamed, entreat; as a deceiver, and yet true; unknown, and yet well known; dying, should live; chastened, should not be killed; should be, though sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; though poor, yet making many rich; though having nothing, yet possessing all things.

And is not this the history of many souls now? launched into the world with many capabilities; cast among contending influences, with much to attract them to this side and that; choosing, even when they choose best, very much amiss; mistaking the true ends, and pursuing the best ends with unhallowed means; making resolutions as if they could keep on a level with the highest, and yet needing to humble themselves beneath the lowest; zealous for half truths, and opposing themselves to whole ones; puffed up, rather than humbled, by knowledge; kept from God, rather than brought near to Him, by their observances; sure to deteriorate, and to be overcome by the world which they think they have renounced;—when God of his mercy meets them, and pleads with them as only God pleads; shews them the love they are wounding, and withdraws the veil; and they see in whose presence they are, and can see nothing else, nor even this again; for the excess of light has blinded them, light which they cannot yet believe to be theirs, and promises which they dare not take as they are

offered; till to the dark, faint, helpless soul the message comes again, and the eyes are opened to see in common day uncommon light,—to see Him ever present, to believe in Him as the absolver, to find Him the teacher and strengthener; till what they once thought to accomplish in their own strength, they learn to perform in his; what they thought to bring about in their own way, they accept in his; what was good in their old selves they find preserved, what was evil is daily purged away; till they, too, by being last become first; by dying, live; by having nothing of their own, come to possess all things in God,

THINGS SEEN AND UNSEEN.

BY THE

REV. J. H. GURNEY, M.A.

II. CORINTHIANS IV. 18.

We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

AT first sight this saying of the Apostle seems a contradiction. To *see* a thing, and *look at* it, are very nearly the same; at any rate, speaking literally, and without a figure, we cannot be said to look at a thing which is out of sight. We may think of it, we may wish for it, we may talk about it, if it is a thousand miles off; but we must get much nearer to it, and have a clear space between us and it, before we can be said to look at it. So the Apostle might write and preach about the unseen things of eternity: but if they were beyond his view, how could he look at them? And then for the other part of his saying, "We look not at the things which are seen," if he had his eyes open how could he help it? With the sun shining down upon him, and fields and towns spread out before him, and thousands of living creatures thronging both, he must look at them surely whether he cared about them or not.

My brethren, it is this contradiction which is the beauty and glory of our text. It gives force and emphasis

to the Apostle's words. It makes them strike the heavier and sink the deeper.

Let us try to understand this apparent inconsistency. We shall find, if we inquire into the Apostle's meaning, that his words are significant and well-chosen. He wishes to speak of something which is beyond sense and above nature, and therefore he announces it as the Christian's privilege to look a good deal farther than common men, and to behold, with some distinctness, what is hidden from their view, by the nearer objects of time and sense.

I. To "look at" unseen things is *to have a full and undoubting persuasion of their reality*. What we see with our eyes we are sure of; and the true Christian is sure of all that GOD has told him. He regards the truths which make up his creed not with a dreaming kind of belief, but with a clear, abiding, practical conviction. He receives them not merely as taught by the Church, or received from his fathers, or urged upon him by his ministers, but as living truths, bearing sensibly upon his heart and conscience, shaping his thoughts and purposes, and giving a new colour to his whole being. The things that *have been*,—the fall, the curse, the flood, the calling of the chosen people, the giving of the law, the ministry of the prophets,—and, greater still, the other chain of events to which these were all preparatory, the incarnation of our blessed LORD, His words of wisdom and works of power, the shame and glory of His Cross, the triumph of His resurrection, the might of His Apostles in their weakness, and the confounding of the world's wisdom by their foolishness,—all this to him is not a story only, but a reality; a reality with which his own happiness, his own hopes, his own life, are all bound up.

And the things which *shall be*,—the winding up of his earthly history, and the beginning of his eternal day, death, the judgment scene, the opened books, the spoken doom, the gathered millions of his brethren, the attendant retinue of angels, hell and heaven receiving each its own, and retaining them for ever, his own goodly mansion and shining crown, the song of jubilee, loud as the noise of many waters and of mighty thunderings, “Hallelujah, for the LORD GOD Omnipotent reigneth,”—all this is present to his mind not as something that *may be*, but as something that *shall* and *must be*, more certain than tomorrow’s sun rising, drawing nearer and nearer, silently yet surely, hour by hour. His belief in these things, and especially his belief of his own concern and interest in them, is another kind of thing from the world’s assent to the message which declares them. They hear about them, speak about them now and then, think about them, it may be, yet oftener; he “*looks at*” them, tries to realize them and bring them near, chides himself for letting the things which are seen and temporal stand before them and hide them so much. To the one they are the end of life;—the gloomy end, the merry-hearted will say: the dreaded end, often, by the men whose consciences are at all awake;—to the other they are the harvest, the prize, the crown of life.

II. To “look at the things which are not seen” means also *to have a supreme regard to them in our plan and course of life*, to choose things or reject them, to value or despise them, to pursue them eagerly or use them moderately, according to the bearing they have upon our eternal prospects. We perpetually have to come to some decision which involves a considerable change in our outward circumstances, which we expect

to have an influence upon our character or our fortunes. We choose a place, a calling, a residence, a friend, a wife, or husband. Now do we ask ourselves these questions at such times, " Will this change be for my soul's health? Shall I serve GOD better where I am going? Will any hindrances be removed or any helps gained? It may be a more gainful place that I am going to; but will it be a safer one? There seems a good opening for business there; but will there be ample leisure for devotion? If I move, shall I be nearer my most faithful Christian friends, or farther from them? Shall I find more or fewer temptations? Shall I have the same choice of my company, and will those I meet with oftenest give me a helping hand towards heaven? I may be richer if I go elsewhere, but shall I be more useful or more happy? If I alter my condition, and take my fancy or my liking for my guide, shall I have one ever at my side who will be a wise friend, a faithful counsellor, whose own face is set towards heaven, and who will urge me to make sure of it, or one who will hang upon me like a dead-weight at every step, and persuade me to take the world for my home, and seek no other?"

Questions like these, my brethren, shew where a man's heart is, and what his faith is worth. You know very well that another set of questions are those which are commonly asked. The very language that is in every-day use, and in almost every body's mouth, proves how earthly men are in their notions and feelings, and how completely the Christian rule of judgment is out of sight. One person will tell you he has got a *good place*. What does he mean commonly? Work not over hard, a master decently kind and reasonable, wages

rather better, it may be, than common. Yet his soul may be starving, perhaps; there may be no gathering of the household before God's mercy-seat morning and evening, no Christian counsel, no pious conversation, no fear of God, possibly, either in the parlour or the kitchen. A tradesman if he be asked after an interval how he is doing, whether he is prospering or not, will answer, "Yes, *excellently well*; he does not wish to do better; every thing goes smoothly with him;" and his words mean that his business is growing, his credit is good, his customers are kind; though it may be that his prosperity is eating out the heart of his religion, and, as he gets richer, he gets less devout and more covetous. A parent will say of his child that he has formed a *most desirable connexion*, meaning that he has married into a respectable family, or got a fortune, though the persons with whom he has allied himself may be worldly to the heart's core, or even irreligious and profane.

My brethren, in these things men speak as they feel and think. We must not quarrel with their phrases; it is their hearts that are wrong. The rule they measure with is a false one. Pelf, ease, independence, credit with the world, pleasant accommodating friends,—these are the treasures they covet, and so the thing that helps them to any of them is a good thing, good in their eyes because they look at the things which are seen, and forget the Christian's prize and calling. We can hardly imagine a better rebuke for men of this sort than just to take the Apostle's words into their lips sometimes and say, "I look not at the things which are seen. I count *that* to be good which humbles me, weans me from my idols, fortifies me against temptation, reminds me of CHRIST and his love, prompts me to duty, brings heaven

nearer to me, and urges me on faster towards it. I call every thing evil, most evil, that hurts my soul, or binds it closer to the world, though I should get by it riches past counting, and fame that will last while the world lasts. I use the things I find here: they are GOD's, and HE lets me have the benefit of them; but my thoughts are not busy about them; my heart does not cling to them; I could be contented and feel myself rich, if they were gone; I do not look at them so as to rest upon them, but look through them and beyond them to my home and my LORD in heaven." I say, my brethren, those words, if you make them your own, will rebuke many of you. You will feel they are not true. The very opposite description would suit you better. Where, then, is your Christianity, and what are your hopes worth?

III. To "look at the things which are not seen" may have another meaning, namely, *to comfort and refresh ourselves with the thought of them*, to balance earth's trials against heaven's joys, and then feel them light; to go often and often to the mountain top that we may behold the good land which our LORD will give us, and then come down again to renew our labours more actively and more hopefully. In this sense, specially, the term seems to be used by the Apostle in our text. He had been speaking of his troubles in the verse before, and he says, "That which makes me strong to bear up under them is the hope my SAVIOUR gives me of seeing HIM one day upon His throne. The darkest prison in which I can ever lie has a window in it, through which I can look over the broad waste of life, and beyond the river of death, to the promised land of rest and freedom. 'The LORD knoweth them that are His,' and His redeemed ones HE will exalt with triumph to His own right hand.

My 'light afflictions' are 'for a moment, and they work out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' "

O the mighty power of Christian faith! O the blessedness and glory of a hope full of immortality! Why, one would think if we came to a company of pilgrims bound upon a toilsome journey, and said, "I will give you something to carry in your bosom, that will put strength into your limbs when you are weariest, and bring joy into your hearts when they are saddest, that will direct you infallibly, wherever you shall pitch your tent, to one pure unfailing spring at which you may drink your fill, and then lie down in peace, and wake up a new man on the morrow,"—one would think, I say, that such a message would be received with eager joy, and that the gift would be regarded as the most precious of their treasures. Yet to our fellow men journeying towards eternity we offer this again and again, and they will not have it. If you saw the soldier arming for battle, and said to him, "Wear this upon your head, and no weapon shall wound you; you will be like a charmed man; in the very thick of the fight you may be calm and self-possessed; the strength of the enemy is departed from them; the bravest of them will flee before you;" you would expect to hear him answer, "Prove all this respecting the armour you offer me, and I will wear it gladly;" yet often and often we have to bring the same tidings to men called to fight against the world and the Wicked One, and yet, for the Christian's "helmet, the hope of salvation," which would do all this for them, they will not reach forth their hand.

But remember, when we speak thus, it must be *Christian* faith, and *Christian* hope that you take along with you, or you will find yourselves mocked and disap-

pointed. Faith resting upon CHRIST, drawing you to HIM as your life and strength, going hand in hand with godly sorrow and evangelical humility, fed every day by the Spirit of holiness and truth, kept alive by prayer and watchfulness, and self-discipline;—this will keep your mind at rest, will be as an anchor to your soul when the storms of life shall beat upon you, will make you calm and self-possessed when other men stagger and are at their wits' end. But nothing short of this will do. The tidings that heaven is a goodly place, so full of light and glory, peopled with saints and angels, lighted up from end to end with the presence of GOD and the LAMB, the report that they who dwell there behold their SAVIOUR's glory, sit upon the steps of His throne, are changed into His likeness, delight to render unto HIM century after century some fresh tribute of praise,—all this is worth nothing to me unless I may hope to have a part in it; and my hope, to be a sustaining, animating, purifying principle, must be not the hypocrite's hope, or the worldling's hope, but the saint's hope, based upon GOD's word, the fruit of CHRIST's atonement, breathed into me by the HOLY GHOST, the COMFORTER. Another may talk of heaven, as I may talk of gold mines in Mexico, or of spice groves in Ceylon, knowing they are not mine, and assured that I shall never see them; but to look at heaven as the Apostle did, I must be able to conclude on good warrant that I have a part in it, that in GOD's good time, through his abundant and undeserved mercy, I shall walk the golden streets, and taste the fruit of the tree of life, and drink of that river which makes glad the city of the blest. Remember this, my dear brethren, and be not satisfied to dream about a happy immortality while you may have a foretaste of it. Do not cheat yourself with the silly fancy that it is your

inheritance, and will come to you without your seeking it. Do not, because CHRIST proclaims the gift a free one, therefore conclude that it will be given indiscriminately to all.

"The things which are seen," remember, *"are temporal."* Look at your *money* to-morrow, and remember this. It feels solid now; it weighs heavy; it passes current in the market; it will buy, according to your store of it, necessities, comforts, luxuries. But it is *for a time*; on the bed of death, it will seem not worth so much as the draught that gives you an hour's ease or sleep.

Look at your *homes*; they are pleasant to retreat to, the quiet, happy resting-places in our journey, where the world's noise is shut out, and its hard usage is forgotten; the havens which are ever within reach when the wind rises out of doors, and the waves roar, and our vessel begins to creak,—but they are only *for a time*; a single night may spoil them of their treasure, nay, may make our ownership all a nullity, may leave us only one dark chamber for our own, from which we shall be carried forth to one yet darker.

Look at *the pleasures* which the young are so mad after, the *honours* which their fathers dote upon, the *thrones* which the mighty are contending for; they are *for a time*. Shall we give our hearts to them; shall we store up our treasure in them? We might as well set our hearts upon the fleeting colours of the rainbow; our treasure would be as safe in a little, crazy boat, leaking at every joint, set afloat by itself on the broad Atlantic.

Look at your *business*, your round of every-day duties and engagements, your buying and selling, your petty contentions with some, and your friendly greetings with

others,—all these are *for a time*. Fifty years probably, a hundred years certainly, will find them all ended with every one of you; every account closed, your profits spent, your losses forgotten, all you loved and all you hated swept away, and lying side by side in the adjoining churchyard. How should this thought sober us, shame us from our hot pursuit of earthly good, and make us deal with our fellow-men as brethren, in the spirit of mutual kindness, with undeviating uprightness and good faith, forgiving as we hope to be forgiven, rejoicing to be helpful unto others, as we have been mercifully helped, and expect to be freely saved ourselves.

And then your *troubles* too are *for a time*. The trifling vexations of life and its heavy burdens,—the common calamities which you share with others, and the heart's bitterness known only to yourselves,—the world's sorrow which worketh death, and the godly man's sorrow which tendeth unto life,—the sad hours in which friends wound and wrong you, and the sadder ones in which you mourn over your own ingratitude to God,—all the harvest of woes which sin has been sowing and men have been reaping for six thousand years,—these are to have an end: we should look at them all, and put up with them all, remembering why it is that trials meet us at every step, and that it depends upon our own choice whether they shall soon be all left behind us or multiplied and aggravated a hundred-fold.

“*The things which are not seen,*” on the other hand, “*are eternal.*” The *soul* is to live for ever. Cherish it, therefore, though you cannot see it. Remember that *its* life is *your* life, *its* death *your* death. Let the body fare as it may, all is well if *that* is well. Let the world go as it will, you are safe and rich when that is sheltered in the

good Shepherd's fold. If that be growing in strength and comeliness, you are a thriving man; if it be still unsanctified, why then you are a dying man, and near to being a lost man. Do you remember this when you rise up early and late take rest, and grudge no pains, and carry contentedly such a load of care to get a living, and yet do not twice in a year perhaps spend one half hour in examining the inner man of the heart, nay, have never begun possibly to this day to ask yourself whether it be alive to God?

The other world, the world which the curtain of the flesh shuts out, is to last for ever,—not this which looks so solid, and feels so firm, and has such a show of life and bustle about it; this is to pass away, to melt into nothing, and be forgotten. What a strange, disordered scene, then, is this, where most are storing up treasure to be consumed, and hear of “the City which hath foundations,” the strong, well-compacted fortress, which God has built for the eternal dwelling-place of His children, much as they listen to accounts of crystal palaces, or floating islands, in some fairy tale!

The rewards of the righteous,—their attainments in knowledge and holiness, their vision of God, and songs of praise, and free converse with the millions of the blest, their ever-growing admiration of God's works and ways, and hourly-repeated tribute of adoring love and gratitude,—and *the woes of the impenitent* in their dark prison, with the vile and reprobate for their only company, and their own self-accusing thoughts for their worst tormentors,—these, too, are for ever; both of them, the evil and the good, are the harvest for which we are sowing by the deeds of every day, by the thoughts of every minute. O surely, surely, we ought to walk more warily, to speak with a bridle upon our

lips, to watch the mind's secret movements with a holier jealousy!

My brethren, we might pursue the subject into more detail; but enough is done, perhaps, if I have put your thoughts and feelings into a right train, if I have brought you solemnly to consider the announcement of the text, and to prove by it the worth of your labours, and the reasonableness of your hopes. O that we might all engage in our worship of to-day, and in our occupations of to-morrow, remembering that "the things which are seen are temporal, and the things which are not seen are eternal." It is plain, if this be so, that indifference about religion is madness. The distant, the hidden, outweighs the near and palpable, as much as our solid globe outweighs the smallest mote that dances in the sunbeam, and a thousand times more. But it can only be by an effort, by a struggle, by a victory over ourselves, nay, by a thousand victories over flesh and sense, that we escape from that which surrounds us, and presses upon us, and shuts us in, to the Mount of Contemplation, or to the sanctuary of devotion, whence we may see the gates of the Celestial City, and where we may commune in secret with the "Father of our Spirits." The distant must be brought near; the hidden must be made manifest; what Scripture declares should be to us as that which our eye hath seen, or our ear hath heard, or our hands have handled. Faith, then, a living faith in God's promises through CHRIST, must be our telescope. And God's spirit must clear our sight, or we shall be like blind men with a glass in their hand. Not once, therefore, but daily must we pray, "LORD, increase our faith; set our affections on things above. We are too much at home here for strangers and pilgrims. O wean our hearts from earth and its vanities, and fix them on Thyself, on the

joys of Thy salvation, and the glories of Thy kingdom. May we be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. O, Thou LAMB of God, who takest away the sin of the world, pardon, pardon, we beseech Thee, our past worldliness, and let our conversation be henceforth in heaven."

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REPENTANCE.

BY THE

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ST. LUKE XV., 10.

*I say unto you, that there is joy in the presence of the angels
of God over one sinner that repenteth.*

AT this season of penitential discipline*, so wisely appointed by the Church as a season of especial self-examination and self-abasement, when the humbled Christian stands in need of support in carrying on his spiritual contest, it is well for him that he is enabled, if he will, to derive consolation and encouragement from the Word of God himself. When sinful man is brought by reflection to feel the sad and deplorable state in which he is, and to acknowledge that his evil conditions of his own grievous fault, and that, if it should please the Almighty to enter into judgment with him, he has nothing of his own to plead against the terrible sentence due to sin, nothing to appease the anger of God, or abate the fury of His just indignation; he is then in danger of sinking under his overwhelming convictions, and would well-nigh be brought to despair, did not a voice from on high encourage him to go to the throne of grace with boldness, and thence to obtain mercy in his time of need. Of such a nature is the declaration of our Saviour, "I say unto you, that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth;" in which there is something so simple in expression, and yet so sublime in conception, so consolatory in doctrine,

* The season of Lent.

and so universal in application, that I doubt whether the whole compass of Holy Writ affords a passage of greater interest. Imagine to yourselves, brethren, the heavens and all the powers therein, cherubim and seraphim, the vast innumerable company of angels, assembled round the throne of the Almighty, and thence beholding with pleasure the first workings of the Spirit of CHRIST in the awakened sinner, watching with intense anxiety his conflict with the powers of darkness, and hailing his final triumph with notes of joy and gladness.

Could the most hardened and impenitent sinner free himself for a while from the bands of iniquity, and raise his thoughts to the things that are above,—could he but turn his eyes to the contemplation of the glories of that place, where CHRIST sitteth on the right hand of GOD, the one Mediator between GOD and man, he must of necessity, one would think, be struck at once with the heinousness of sin and all its dreadful consequences,—so dreadful, that when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness even the angels of GOD rejoice; and then applying to his own case the awful denunciations against sin on the one hand, and the free offer of grace and mercy on the other, and comparing his present condition as the slave of Satan with what it ought to be as the servant of GOD, must be arrested in his course of wickedness, and be brought at least to consider for a time his own awakening interest in the Gospel message; which, while it warns him to flee from sin by the threatening of a worm that never dies, and a fire that is not quenched, does at the same time animate to self-denial and a striving after holiness, by the promises of a heaven, where, for every faithful servant of CHRIST, “there is fulness of joy for evermore.”

In considering more at large our Lord's declaration

in the text, instead of adhering to the precise words in which it is conveyed, let us rather take a practical view of the declaration itself. For however pleasing it may be to the imagination to wander into the regions of the unknown world and speculate on the feelings and agencies of the celestial essences,—however comforting to the devout and penitent candidate for immortality may be the assurance that the angels of GOD who may be supposed to be perpetually actuated by a warm and lively interest in the welfare of the human race, are sympathising with him in his contest for the prize of the high calling of GOD in JESUS CHRIST, yet on a subject of such importance, affecting as it does the eternal interests of every one of us, it will surely be wiser and more profitable to the solid and beneficial purposes of true religion to strip the subject of all that is figurative, and to take a plain and practical view of it with reference to the realities of the actual state of man.

Now, if we regard the words of our Saviour in this manner, we shall discover in them a declaration of the merciful intentions of GOD towards fallen man. They assure us, in accordance with the universal spirit of the Bible, in a manner one would imagine too plain to be misunderstood, that the conversion of sinners is in the highest degree acceptable to GOD. And this will appear even more clearly if we consider the words as the words of Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost, and interpret them in connexion with the parables in the context. In illustration, the shepherd is represented as abandoning his flock in search of a lost sheep, and rejoicing when he had found the wanderer. Thus, too, the woman is said to have forgotten her other treasure in her joy at the recovery of the piece she had lost. Thus, too, we are told that the best robe, the ring, and

the fatted calf, were called for when the prodigal son returned unto his father's house. "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad," says the forgiving father in the parable; "for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." Such too, no doubt, is the merciful reason why the angels of God are represented as rejoicing over one sinner that repenteth, because it is an earnest to them that he is on the way to salvation.

And, in fact, in almost every page of the Bible the same merciful representation is brought before our minds. It is expressly and abundantly declared, "that God willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live." It would be tedious, and indeed unprofitable, to bring forward the numberless passages in which the willingness of the Almighty to restore to spiritual life him that was dead in trespasses and sin is set forth. The uniform tenor of Scripture assures us, that God has no pleasure in the punishment of wicked men—no gratification in their misery and torment—no desire for their eternal death. On the contrary, He would rather that they should be saved—He would rather that they should renounce their wickedness and turn to Him by true repentance, and so, through the merits of the Saviour, become heirs of eternal life.

I am not, of course, ignorant, that a widely different interpretation has been applied to the language and intention of Scripture on this subject. A distinction has been drawn by some between the declarations of Holy Writ respecting repentance under the Mosaic dispensation, and even during the ministry of CHRIST on earth, and those made subsequently to the gift of the HOLY GHOST—between the efficacy of repentance, *i.e.*,

in the case of the Jew and unbaptized heathen, and in that of the baptized Christian. It has been inferred, that as the promise of pardon and forgiveness annexed to repentance, which was made to wicked Jews and unbelievers, on their first conversion to Christianity, relates only to their sins committed before baptism, it is not applicable to the case of the believer, and that such expectations are scantily, if at all, held out by the Apostles to baptized Christians. Nay, further, it has been questioned by some, in opposition to our Sixteenth Article, and in revival of the ancient heresy, whether for deadly sin committed after baptism there be any room for repentance? or, as others suggest by way of modification, except through ecclesiastical penance and ministerial absolution. It is, indeed, true, that the cases of the heathen, the Jew, and the Christian are, in their spiritual conditions, different. But still there must be, so to speak, an identity of religious principles under every dispensation. There may be a variation in extent; but the foundation will be the same. The attributes of the Almighty remain unchangeable. Inconsistency in his dealings with man is impossible.

If, therefore, it could be shewn that there is not a single direct assurance of the acceptableness of repentance in the Apostolical Epistles, still the other declarations of Scripture on that subject would remain in force, without some express and authoritative contradiction of them by those inspired writers themselves. But (and it is worthy of remark, that several of the most striking passages of the Old Testament are introduced into our Homily on Repentance) in addition to the many direct promises of forgiveness upon repentance made to the Jews, which hold so prominent a position in the writings of the Old Testament, and are undisputed and

undeniable—in addition further to the oft-repeated and positive assurances of CHRIST himself, that sinners coming to Him, *i.e.*, by faith and repentance, He would in no wise cast out—all of them in accordance with the unvarying character of his merciful intercourse with man on earth, and all without limitation or peculiarity of application; in addition, or perhaps I should rather say, in connection with these undoubted and irrefragable testimonies in favour of the acceptableness of true repentance, look to the writings of the Apostles themselves addressed to Christian converts. What else can be the meaning of that distinct and well-known passage of St. John, in his first general Epistle, “If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Surely it contains so plain and comprehensive a view of the subject as to admit of no other inference, than that, *as* through the frailty of our nature we are always liable to yield to some one of the many temptations to sin by which we are surrounded, and to be betrayed into the transgression of GOD’s law; so also, if we duly apply ourselves unto GOD by repentance, we may hope to be renewed by His grace, and pardoned by His mercy. Again, if St. Paul had considered that, for those who had received remission of their sins in the Sacrament of Baptism, there was no further promise of forgiveness of their future sins upon repentance, we should not surely find that inspired teacher of Christianity speaking of the goodness of GOD leading to repentance, and reproving those who, after their hardness and impenitent hearts were treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath. Neither would he have addressed that very striking passage to the

Corinthian converts, in which he rebukes some of them, who had given themselves up to unchristian tempers, and still more unchristian conduct—even deadly sin—and had not repented; exhorting them to reform before he should come, that he might not have to censure them for their continuing in sin and impenitence. But besides, what can be the object of all the warnings against sin and impenitence, and all the continual and urgent exhortations to holiness, addressed to baptised converts, still living in sin, if there had been no room for repentance left to them—no hope that forgiveness in CHRIST JESUS would be the result of their conversion,—if they were not even then to be admitted to the benefits of the Atonement? If, therefore, the Apostles, in addressing their respective Churches, (and it must ever be borne in mind, that the several Epistles are adapted to the peculiar state of each particular Church addressed,) if, therefore, they did not reiterate direct promises of pardon and reconciliation with GOD for those who repented of their sins, they yet give abundance of confirmation to the doctrine, by warning the converts in the strongest terms of the danger of continuing in sin; and by teaching them that there is no condemnation to them that are in CHRIST JESUS, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The inference from the whole of their teaching is, that, if the converts continued in sin, they would be punished; and that, if they repented from dead works, they would be pardoned in and through CHRIST. Being themselves filled with the HOLY GHOST, and in all things acting under his divine direction, it cannot be supposed that they would have inculcated such doctrines unless they had felt authorised to encourage the hope that repentance arising from faith, and producing a sincere endeavour henceforth to observe the law of God,

would, through the merits of the Saviour's death, avert the punishment denounced against sin, and procure an admission into the Kingdom of Heaven.

That such also is the opinion of the Church to which we belong appears manifestly from her Sixteenth Article, alluded to already; and from the striking correspondence of her Homilies and Liturgy with the consolatory representations of Scripture. In fact, I cannot conceive it possible for any candid enquirer after truth to read through the emphatic Homily on Repentance, "which," as the Thirty-fifth Article says of the Homilies in general, "doth contain a godly and wholesome doctrine," without being convinced that all true preachers of the Gospel ought, if I may so apply the very language of the Homily itself, "always in their preachings unto the people to join these two together," I mean repentance and forgiveness of sins, even as our Saviour JESUS CHRIST did Himself appoint, saying, "So it behoved CHRIST to suffer and to rise again the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name among all nations."

And with good reason should it be so. For, with the limitation annexed, what, I would ask, become of the promises of the Christian covenant? those bright and glorious promises which are freely offered to all, who will be induced to accept them? Take away the merciful parts of it, the offers of pardon and forgiveness through CHRIST graciously made to repenting sinners, and you make the Gospel not a message of peace and reconciliation, but a message of condemnation. For it cannot be denied that in proportion as the Christian's privileges are greater, so also are his obligations to obedience more imperative. More has been given to him, and therefore assuredly of him will more be

required. "Except your righteousness," said the Lord to his followers in words of much impressiveness, and to be applied not only to His immediate followers at the time, but to professing Christians of every age, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." When, therefore, we consider what the condition of fallen man still is—how great the infirmity of the flesh, how fearful his inability to do any good thing *as of himself*, and yet how inconstant his vigilance in applying the graces of the Gospel to resist temptation both from within and without, and consequently his increased liability to sin on account of the sublimer purity required of him as a Christian,—cheerless indeed would be the prospect of the penitent, if he had no ground for confidence in looking for a gracious reception from the loving-kindness of the LORD, according to the preaching of truth, the Gospel of CHRIST.

Let it not here be objected that, by thus teaching, we teach, what may be denominated, too ready a forgiveness, and thereby we lead to sin. For surely the doctrine must be but ill explained or little understood, and the workings of grace but little comprehended, when a continuance in sin is likely to result from an assurance of the acceptableness of repentance. The heart of the real penitent, *out of love to God*, abhors sin: and will not therefore be induced to fall back into it by being more fully convinced of the mercy of GOD. He will rejoice in believing that the affectionate regard of the Almighty Father towards his returning son is unlimited—that He is long-suffering and of great goodness, and willeth not that any should be lost, but that all should be converted and saved. But then he knows besides that, if any man, in

whom the HOLY SPIRIT had wrought a consciousness of the evil of his ways, should relapse into his former state, his latter end will be worse than the first: and further that, if any man wilfully commit sin under the delusion that he may when he pleases repent and be saved, there is every reason to fear that he will be held so fast under the dominion of the Prince of darkness that he will not be able to escape to the light. For, inasmuch as it is by the grace of God only that the heart is awakened to a sense of it's danger, he who does despite to that grace by continuing in sin, that grace may abound, is not likely to receive fresh supplies of Divine assistance. There is a time, we are assured, when the Spirit of God will cease to strive with man. The proud heart of the wicked Pharaoh was still in the same unsubdued state after all the admonitions of the Prophet, and all the increasing visitations of the wrathful indignation of God: he professed repentance and promised amendment, but only fell into more heinous sin: until at length we find the Almighty did not give repentance to the rebellious tyrant. When once the tempter has been permitted to obtain a hold on the heart, and notwithstanding the proffered resistance of the HOLY SPIRIT to maintain it with continually increasing strength, the eyes become closed against the handwriting on the wall though written in characters of fire, and the ears refuse to hear the warning voice even though it speak to them in thunder.

To those, who, like myself, have been engaged in parochial ministrations, I may appeal for confirmation in this statement. Sad is it to see the determined sinner, pursuing his course of wickedness and impenitence, undeterred alike by any mercies, and the still more merciful warnings to flee the wrath to come, and not at all prevented from persevering in his mad career,

even by the manifest hand of the Almighty. But sadder still to be called upon to visit him when seized upon by the hand of death. He shudders to find himself on the point of quitting this scene of probation to appear before his Judge. A terrific feeling of the awfulness of his situation, combined with the rackings of bodily pain, reduce him to a state of wretchedness and despair. If he can be induced to pray, he prays as one without hope; and he breaks forth into repinings which are but signs of his consternation and perplexity. On the one hand are presented to his view, the threatenings of a just God against sin; and on the other, the opportunities he has lost, and the warnings he has neglected, of making his peace with Heaven.—How different the dying moments of the penitent Christian; of him, who by faith and repentance has become reconciled to God! The tears of contrition have been wiped away and the cheerful smile of hope bespeaks the peace within. With calmness and resignation to the Divine will he bears his sufferings; and in the humble confidence of one, whose repentance has been accepted, he looks forward beyond the grave; and, through the valley of the shadow of death, sees the towers of the heavenly city rising to his view and anticipates the joys of eternity.

Doubtless, therefore, there is infinite danger to any one, who having been baptized into the name of CHRIST and thereby admitted to all the privileges of his Christian profession, strives not, however, to grow in grace, but permits himself to live on in the commission of wilful sin. But the danger even then is, not because there is no offer of pardon made to him on his full repentance, but because it is not likely that such an one, who is continually resisting the motions of the HOLY SPIRIT and stifles the voice of conscience, will ever fully repent.

And therefore does it seem incumbent on the messengers of God to man, while they point to the pardon granted to the one penitent thief on the cross, as a ground of hope to the sinner, awakened *however late* to a sense of his state and a feeling of his spiritual necessities—at the same time forcibly to direct attention to the other, by way of admonitory example and fearful warning: for any thing we are told to the contrary, he died blaspheming, impenitent, and unpardoned! But, even then, the minister of the Gospel will not dare to distrust the infinite extent and capacity of God's mercy and graciousness, nor set bounds to the unlimited merits of CHRIST, the Saviour.

It is indeed possible, and doubtless such has been the case, that the saving and consolatory doctrines of the Atonement may be misrepresented. CHRIST may be set forth as the Author of Salvation to Mankind, without any mention being made of the Author of Sanctification also. The scheme of redemption may be so mis-stated as to degenerate into Antinomianism. What then? Is it therefore necessary that in order to avoid one heresy we should fall into another? Is it not possible to preach CHRIST without reserve; to acknowledge no other Saviour, Redeemer, Mediator, Advocate, and Intercessor, but CHRIST only; to follow Scripture in declaring that through Him is dispensed all the assistance which the sinner requires in working out his salvation, and that He is the rock on which every Christian must found all his faith and all his hopes? and at the same time, without derogating one jot or tittle from the merits of his all-sufficient sacrifice, so to preach Him as to leave on the mind an impression strong and indelible, and which is thoroughly in accordance with the many explicit statements of Holy Writ,

and the authoritative teaching of the Church, that a profession of faith in CHRIST without the works of the Spirit, and of repentance without amendment, are dead and unprofitable towards salvation in CHRIST, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works: and that, as it is a lively faith alone which can be productive of a hearty repentance, so also that he, who by penitence hopes for the saving benefits of CHRIST's sacrifice, can only do so safely *by bringing forth fruits meet for repentance.*

Thus, in bringing forward the importance, nay the necessity of scriptural repentance, there must be no depreciation of the one great doctrine of the Atonement, no detraction from the all-prevailing power of CHRIST. "Him hath GOD exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." It seems manifest from Scripture, that as no man can hope to be pardoned without CHRIST, so neither can he repent without CHRIST: it is a lively faith alone that can be productive of a hearty repentance; and the sinner must be brought to the Saviour, before he will be enabled, in the full Gospel acceptation of the term, to repent. But then it may at the same time, without any contradiction, be urged upon those who pray for the assistance of the HOLY SPIRIT, to enable them to will and to do according to GOD's good pleasure, that they must prove the sincerity of their prayer and the reality of their faith, by the earnestness of their repentance. For they only can hope for the saving benefits of CHRIST's sacrifice who are truly penitent—who have experienced a total change in all the sinful affections of the inner man, and who in their outward conduct give evidence of their conversion, by striving to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

And hence may be discovered the sure characteristics of true repentance. It is a change of habit produced by a change of disposition—a total renewal of the heart in every particular in which it was not right with God. There must first be in the sinner a deep and awakening sense of his sinfulness—of the burden of his sins already committed, and of his tendency to commit others—there must be a knowledge and dread of the wrath of God against all transgression of His law; and an acknowledgment of man's insufficiency by any deeds of his own to turn away the fearful judgments denounced against sin: there must be a longing after some means of deliverance, a feeling of his need of a Saviour, and above all a sure and certain hope that he may have such a Saviour in JESUS CHRIST, who gave Himself for us that He might bring us to God; and then will be produced in him such a thorough awakening of mind and spirit, that he will seek more and more to obtain the Saviour's intercession—will, by the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT, turn to God, and for this love and mercy towards mankind, renounce and detest sin. Genuine scriptural repentance will undoubtedly be made apparent by a corresponding improvement in the outward behaviour; but its vital influence will be within, affecting every propensity of our nature, and rectifying every feeling of the heart by the co-operating agency of the Spirit of CHRIST. It may indeed happen that, by human agency, men may be induced to confess their guilt, and to express their sorrow for it, but, like the acknowledgment of Saul before the reproaches of Samuel—the humbling of Ahab before the prophetic denunciations of Elijah—the trembling of Felix before the preaching of Paul, this is no repentance: nor can the repentance, which by his own express direction was to be preached in CHRIST's name in conjunction with remission of sins, ever be produced by the keenest remon-

strance, or the most encouraging exhortation, unless they are carried to the heart, and cherished there, by the Spirit of the living God. When, however, the sinner has once been mercifully brought to a knowledge of himself, and to confess with humility, and godly sincerity, that he has done many things which he ought not to have done, and has left undone even more which he ought to have done—when self-condemned he finds no excuse to satisfy his conscience, the proud spirit of self-justification sinks within him; and instead, his contrite heart is supported and consoled by an abiding conviction, that “it is a saying worthy of all acceptation, that JESUS CHRIST came into the world to save sinners.”

And where shall we find the man to whom these observations do not in some measure apply, and who needs to take no interest in this doctrine of Christianity, which, initiatory though it be and fundamental, is yet all important? Who is there among the multitudes of mankind, who can compare himself with what man was, when first created in God’s image, and what he still might be, had he duly used his privileges, and what he ought to be as a Christian, bound by his baptismal vow to exercise dominion over his own sinful nature, and resist with the whole armour of GOD all the many enemies of his salvation,—who that with sincerity examines himself, and thus compares what he is with what he ought to be, but must acknowledge himself in the sight of GOD a sinner, not, perhaps, polluted with the taint of heinous sin, nor maintaining fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, yet still a transgressor of the requirements of Gospel purity, and far, very far, from being perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect? Wide therefore as is the latitude, which the general statement of the doctrine admits of, merciful as is the nature of

the dealings of God with man, many and gracious as are His offers of forgiveness and acceptance, made known to us in the revelation of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, yet, in a matter where eternal happiness is at stake, is it possible for us to be too strict, or too scrupulous, in dealing with ourselves? The enquiry into our state must be searching—the self-condemnation uncompromising—the conversion unlimited. A small remains of sin, it must be remembered, will corrupt the whole heart, as surely as it is a little leaven that leaveneth the whole lump. There may be in any of us considerable sense of sin, sorrow, contrition, and a partial desire to turn to God—all good signs, and, by God's grace, tending to repentance—but, if all the while the darling sin maintains the least hold on the heart, if any single feeling or affection, opposed to the word of God, still lurks behind, and is even secretly cherished there, repentance, in the full and scriptural sense of the term, has not yet been attained, and accordingly there must yet be a more earnest desire to reach forth unto the things that are before, and press forward to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in JESUS CHRIST. The path of repentance through faith is, by CHRIST's direction, pointed out to us as the path to heaven; and the further we proceed in it, guided by the HOLY SPIRIT, and improving as we advance, the more shall we be cheered onwards in our search after immortality, until, finally, we are conducted to the regions of everlasting bliss, where we may hope to find the angels of God, in whose presence there had been joy at our repentance, waiting to welcome our arrival; and at last, in fulfilment of the blessed promises of the Gospel, the Lord of life Himself will greet us with the joyful salutation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE BAPTIZED.

BY THE

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VICAR OF KELLS, IN THE DIOCESE OF OSSORY.

ROMANS VI. 3, 4.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

THE Apostle, in the previous chapters of this Epistle, had set forth the universality of human redemption, that is, the provision made by CHRIST for the restoration of the whole human race to that state of happiness for which it had been originally created. He had stated also, that the grace of the Gospel was more than co-extensive with the original sin of Adam, that where sin abounded grace did much more abound; that as sin had reigned unto death even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life through JESUS CHRIST our Lord. It would appear that the enemies of the Gospel had slanderously reported that the doctrine of grace, as taught by the Apostles, countenanced licentiousness of life, and that they even permitted the commission of the grossest sins, in order to be entitled to that gift of grace which was the Christian's privilege. St. Paul opens the chapter, from which the text is taken, with an indignant denial of this malicious charge.

What shall we say then, shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? how shall we, who by our very profession as Christians have renounced it, and by the grace vouchsafed to us, are crucified to it, how can we live in it, and thus deny our holy calling, and evince still our enmity to God? The Apostle then, in the words of the text, appeals to the Roman converts themselves, to their own knowledge of the principles which they had embraced, and the faith into which they had been baptized, to bear witness to the holiness of their calling. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into JESUS CHRIST were baptized into his death?" that is, so many as have been made partakers of CHRIST by baptism, have been made members of his mystical body, have received remission of sins by spiritual regeneration, and become by adoption children of God, so many as have been thus baptized into CHRIST, and by union with Him, have received the promises consequent to that union, were baptized into his death, which was a crucifixion of sin, a condemnation in his own person, and on behalf of his disciples, of all those evils, all those lusts and passions, all that love of this world, its vanities, and pomps and pride, by which man had been enslaved, which were the effect of his original fall, and which had increased in vigour and intensity, in proportion as they gained strength by use, and the moral apprehensions and powers of man had become weakened. CHRIST's death was an utter renunciation of all sin, the perfection of obedience to God's law. "He was obedient unto death; in all things consonant with the will of God, even to the drinking of that bitter cup: into the spirit of this obedience we are baptized; therefore," continues the Apostle, "we are buried with Him by baptism, into death; that like as

CHRIST was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." This passage loses some of its force, in consequence of our not connecting it with the practice of immersion then in use, whereby the emblematical representation alluded to by St. Paul was more apparent; though the terms used in baptism now make it manifest, that the principle is the same, and that, with equal truth, we can use the words of the Apostle to the baptized Christian. For not only do we pray to God before the child is baptized, that the old Adam in the child may be so buried that the new man may be raised up in him, that all carnal affection may die in him, and that all things belonging to the spirit may live and grow in him, but after the child is baptized and regenerated with God's Holy Spirit, and made his child by adoption, we pray, almost in the very words of the Apostle, that he being buried with **CHRIST** in his death may crucify the old man and utterly abolish the whole body of sin, and that as he is made partaker of the death of his Son he may be also partaker of his resurrection. But the Apostle argues that this burial by baptism into death was in order to the still further amelioration of man's moral and spiritual nature; that Christianity was not a negative state, but one that called into exercise all the moral capacities and faculties of man, and awakened all the energies of our higher nature for the advancement in spiritual life. "We are buried with Him by baptism into death," says the Apostle, "that like as **CHRIST** was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life." God adopts us into his family, makes us partakers of his grace, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness.

It is not for the purpose of entering into any elabo-

rate discussion of the doctrine of Baptism, that I have selected the portion of Scripture now under our consideration; but rather with a view of enlarging upon the duties consequent to it,—of examining the obligations under which the baptized Christian lies, to follow the steps of his blessed Master,—and to show the necessity of man's walking consistently with the profession of his holy calling, and the principles to which he is bound by the sacrament of which he has been made a partaker. I assume, as a truth admitted by all whom I address, that which they affirm in the Creed, that they believe one baptism for the remission of sins, which in itself involves our being baptized into CHRIST's death, and all the privileges of it; and the belief in the perfection of that sacrifice, for where remission of sins is, there is no more offering for sin. And this faith implies, not only the forgiveness of past sin, whether original or actual, but the provision to be made for the future—the strengthening of the soul against the attacks of sin—the grace derived from the sacrificial offering of the Lord JESUS, as the Apostle argues in contrasting the weakness of the legal sacrifices with the efficacy of that of CHRIST. “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the Blood of CHRIST, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to GOD, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living GOD.” Looking, then, to the sacrifice of CHRIST as embracing the two objects, the forgiveness of sin and purification from sin, and his resurrection as emblematical of that new and spiritual life in which man is to walk, we can see the force of the Apostle's argument in the chapter from which the text is taken, and the necessity of looking at the baptismal covenant,

not merely as involving a change in the relative position in which we stand towards God, but as involving also moral obligations of the highest kind—obligations founded upon the very freedom of the grace conveyed, and the nature of the spirit implanted. Baptism would, then, represent unto us our profession, which is, to follow the example of our Saviour CHRIST, and to be made like Him, that as He died and rose again, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness, continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living.

Must we not be painfully sensible that the Christian covenant is not so generally understood, that while the privileges are gladly acknowledged, the duties are sadly overlooked—if, indeed, that could be called a privilege which left man under the dominion of sin, the wages of which is death? There is a fearful propensity in man to look to the different external relationship in which man is placed towards the Divine Being by the Christian covenant, independently of that inward change which is to be wrought, that higher life which is to be cultivated, that spirit of righteousness and peace which is to be within. The professing Christian, in his eagerness to embrace the world, seems to have forgotten that the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour CHRIST, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. “These things,” adds St. Paul, “speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority.” Let no man despise thee. Let not the im-

piety of man, his waywardness or opposition, induce you to withhold this truth, or prevent your impressing it on the minds of those committed to your care. For to be carnally-minded is in itself death; to be spiritually-minded is life and peace. It would need no external hell to make the wicked miserable. He bears that within him, worse than all outward fire—the worm that dieth not. He has the tempest of the soul—the overwhelming fears—the uncontrolled passions—unsatiated desires, feeding on themselves, burning for objects which never can be obtained; wasting with hidden fire, yet not consuming, with the appalling conviction that the state is irremediable—conscience testifying that there was a remedy once for these terrific evils—remedies which were despised.

Does not the voice of conscience sometimes tell man now that to the wicked GOD is consuming fire? Are there no anxious fears about the future? Does the soul never, amidst the bustle and stir and cares and anxieties of this life, assert its claim? Does not the still small voice pierce to the recesses of the human heart, and remind men that there is a world to come, a GOD who judgeth the earth; and does it not, however weak its first warnings, does it not convince us that our spiritual nature has wants which we are not satisfying, demands we are not answering, necessities for which we are making no provision? Does it not convince us, that what it seeks, the world has not to give; that it must be sought from other sources; that it is different in its very nature from all that the world affords? There are few, if any, who have not had some evidence of these truths; whose conscience has not sometimes spoken in a manner not to be misunderstood, and warned them against the perseverance in a course which leads to nothing substantial now, and has no promise but misery for the future.

No, beloved brethren, it is not the voice of a stern master, ignorant of our necessities, or regardless of our happiness, who says "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." It is One who knows what is in man—who knows not only as God, but by all the sympathies of a common nature; who was Himself made in the likeness of man; who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities; was in all points tempted as we are; who, with all the world at his command, with all created nature under his dominion, who could have made all things minister to his gratification, taught us by precept and example "that man doth not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;" that the happiness of man consisted not in the abundance of the things he possessed, but that the highest happiness was conformity to God's will; the most solid peace was the result of obedience to his laws; that the crucifixion of the natural man, a denial of self, a renunciation of all pleasure when opposed to the will of God, was, though a present cross, the certain forerunner of everlasting joy in the world to come. Nor must it be imagined that the crucifixion of the natural man, the renunciation of that which the world delights in as its joys, is unmixed pain; there will doubtless be struggles which are painful; there is, the relinquishment of pleasures that does involve present self denial; there may be the scorn of those, who have been companions with us in the course of life we are abandoning, the derision, it may be, of some whose applause we once courted, and of whose censure we were afraid, but these are as dust in the balance when weighed against the reality; and there is an inward peace, a hidden joy, which the natural man cannot take into account, which the human eye sees not, but which defies the frown of the world,

soothes in the midst of trouble, and sheds a calm over the soul even while the troubled surface gives evidence of the outward storm which assails. The life is hid with CHRIST in God. Religion is laying her deep foundations in right apprehension of Almighty God, in the consciousness of the soul's wants, and the source from whence they are supplied, and the taste of that goodness which instils new hopes, animates yet more ardent desires for holiness, gives energy to all the higher faculties of our nature, enlarges the heart to run in the way of God's commandments, and, even in the dawn of that day-spring from high, assures us by its present blessings that all her ways are pleasantness, all her paths peace. But this can only be by union with CHRIST, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification; who is the source of spiritual life, the author of that peace which the world can neither give nor take away. And it behoves us to ask ourselves whether we are in the way of that peace—whether we are fulfilling the purpose of our holy calling, and reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through JESUS CHRIST our Lord? Nor is it difficult to see the distinction between worldly and Christian principle if we study the character of our blessed Lord, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Let us contrast the spirit of one with that of the other, and we shall see how broad the line of demarcation is, and then judge ourselves, whether being baptized into CHRIST we are really dead unto sin, and living unto God. Consider, then, the Saviour's constant devotion to the will of God; his undivided service, his ready obedience, his ardent prayers, and contrast it, with the coldness, the indifference, the enmity of will betrayed even by the professing Christian, and say, if he be really the follower of Him whose meat it was to do his Father's

will; or consider the matchless purity of that holy Being who knew no sin—who, when the hour of the prince of darkness came, could say, The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me; no chord within that would vibrate to the touch of sin—no unsubdued sense, which would be liable to be moved by the seductive arts of the tempter, or yield to his assaults. Consider the self-denial, the purity, the privations which He underwent who had all things at his command, and contrast it with the sensual indulgence, the unbridled desires, the lust and ambition prevalent in the world, and say, If there be the Spirit of the Holy Jesus in those thus influenced, and led captive by the will of the flesh; or mark the patient victim, led as a sheep to the slaughter, the sport of malice and insult, subjected to the revilings of the offscouring of the earth, pursuing Him with the infuriate cry of “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Behold Him, buffeted, spit upon, and condemned on the false accusation of his enemies, and at length nailed to the accursed tree! See Him, amidst the storm of violence, injustice, and oppression, meek and submissive, and with legions of angels at his command, taking no vengeance into his own hands, but committing all to his Heavenly Father; and at length, in the very agonies of the cross, praying for his murderers—“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Compare this with the violence of human revenge, the resistance man offers to insult, and the fearful manner in which he takes into his own hands the vengeance which belongs to God alone, and say whether the spirit which influenced the mind of the benevolent Jesus rules the heart of the violent and revengeful man. Or if we look to the fulfilment of those duties from which we might almost have expected the Son of man to have been exempt—if we behold the

tender sympathies towards the agonized mother, how forgetful of Himself, even while hanging on the cross, He bore the griefs of her thus sorrowing, and commended her to the care of the beloved disciple; and if we compare this with the cold and selfish policy of the world, its heartlessness, and its disregard of others' miseries, we shall find little of that spirit which breathed through the whole life of the Son of man, and manifested the excellence of that Divine nature which dwelt within; we shall see that the Christianity of the world is not the Christianity of the cross, that the religion of the world is not the religion of CHRIST; we shall feel that there is something different from the spirit of our fallen nature to be cultivated—something which is to correct the evils of the natural man, and implant and bring to maturity a higher and holier life; that we are buried with CHRIST by baptism into death, not that we should live as if no new spirit were implanted, no new obligations imposed, no duties laid upon us, but that like as CHRIST was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life, not yielding our members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity, but yielding our members servants to righteousness unto holiness. We shall feel that our old man must be crucified with CHRIST, and the body of sin destroyed, that if we would be partakers of his glory, we must be made meet for the inheritance. No, beloved brethren, religion—the religion of the Gospel—is not a negative state, it is not a profession or a name; it is the Spirit of God, wrought into our inner man, subduing the evil within, controlling the appetites, curbing the desires, sanctifying the spirit, raising the affections, and elevating the mind, until the whole moral constitution of our being moves in a new sphere, and finds its home in heaven.

There is its conversation, there its hopes, and there its joys—joys which the natural eye hath not seen nor the ear heard, and which enter not into the heart of man until man is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him, and walks no longer by sight, but by faith in the Son of God. Then is he one with CHRIST in deed and in truth, and has fellowship with the Father, and his Son, JESUS CHRIST, and rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, walks as seeing Him who is invisible, and purifies himself as He is pure; and having been made free from sin, and become servant to God, he has his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life; and as He has been planted together in the likeness of CHRIST's death shall be also of his resurrection.

THOUGHTS OF CHRIST.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

BY THE

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ENGINEERS' COLLEGE AT PUTNEY.

ST. MATTHEW XXII., part of ver. 42.

What think ye of Christ?

THIS is a solemn question to put to a Christian congregation, when proposed in an assembly of those who have met together to worship GOD, and who make their offerings of praise and prayer in CHRIST's name.

Holy Scripture tells us that to know JESUS CHRIST is life eternal—to have a right understanding of His nature and office towards us, and a proper appreciation of the relation in which we stand towards Him—on these depends no less than our eternal salvation or our destruction. If His Gospel had not been proclaimed to us, we should not have been placed in so awful a position as that in which we now stand, in whose ears have been set forth the privileges and responsibilities of the new Covenant of God with man; that Covenant of which it is said, that he that receiveth it shall be saved, and he that receiveth it not must perish everlastingly. There is then, with us, no room to halt between two opinions. We have set before us both blessing and cursing—we have the choice set before us whom we would serve—we have professed to choose the better part, that of CHRIST, and have made a solemn confession of our Faith in the words we have all jointly uttered, with one voice pro-

claiming, in the presence of GOD and of each other, our belief in the articles of the Christian's creed. I will then proceed to urge upon you all, bound and pledged as you are by that public avowal, a careful consideration of the estimation in which you hold Him whose name you bear.

You believe in one LORD JESUS CHRIST, the only begotten Son of GOD, and all the chief occurrences of His life on earth, and in His future advent to sit in judgment upon you. It is then a fitting time to urge the question, "*What think ye of Christ?*" In what light do you view all these mighty truths? Are they motives to high enterprise? Do they lead to a vigorous course of action? Are they in *any* respect *influential*? Surely this question comprises in it the pith and marrow of all our admonitions from the pulpit. We are not met to convert the heathen, or to call upon an unbelieving crowd to acknowledge truths of vast importance. This *has* been done—you *have* adhered to the side of CHRIST in oral profession; you testify, by assuming Christian profession, that you have an opinion of the great weight and amazing importance of the truths of Christianity; you know of CHRIST; you hold Him to be the Prophet foretold in ancient prophetic song, the Priest who, by His unrivalled and inconceivable sacrifice, washed away the guilt of a perishing world; the King whose dominion is to extend over all, and last to all eternity; you acknowledge these as general truths, but the question I wish to urge upon you is this, How do you conceive that these truths bear upon your private interests, your peculiar duties? "*What think ye of Christ*" in this respect? That CHRIST is our Saviour; that He came to bring us the knowledge of immortality and the resurrection of the dead; that He bids us all be baptized into

his death, that we may form part of the mystical body to whom great promises of future glory are revealed; all this we acknowledge and believe after a certain manner; at least we flatter our souls that we believe: we think we are of the number of those who have right thoughts of CHRIST, but it may be that many among us deceive themselves. Christianity is a scheme of extensive ramifications. The teaching of its Founder and Head is minute, searching, quick, powerful: his priestly office has intimate and close relation to every duty and every relation of life; his kingly power must be manifested in our inward parts; a ruler there must be in the domain of our hearts and consciences. *What think ye of Christ* in this respect? Is our allegiance so true and so sincere, and so dominant, as to insure a favourable reception to us when He comes back to receive His kingdom and deliver it up to the Father? Shall we stand at His right hand, reign with Him in the heavenly Jerusalem, and be kings and priests of God when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved? He assures us of the eternal verity of all these great views of the future. *What think ye of Christ?* Is His word believed, acted upon, felt to be the one voice with which creation rings, whose echoes ever bring back to our recollection and certify to us the overwhelming importance of the Christian dispensation? Is the life which is by Him our life? Do we live for this alone? To make the question more plain, are we holy, blameless, undefiled,—we who dare to be called Christians? This is what He bids us be, if we are His disciples,—if we have right ideas of Him. *Are we so?* If not, *what think we of Christ?* Can we go on in our light-hearted career and not pause to consider the question which the text propounds to us, which should make each one of us look

into his own heart and examine what we really do think of Him, and whether these our thoughts be worthy thoughts?—thoughts suited to the occasion on which they are called up—thoughts whose character is such as will enable us to answer without shame.

Surely, then, it is not an idle question that is this day made in the name of GOD. What we think of CHRIST will determine whether we are really His members, whether we are branches of the Vine, who are nourished by the communication of life and energy from the parent stem, or whether we are dead, sickly, or perishing shoots, whose end is to be severed and gathered for the burning. It is not a matter of light and trivial import to review in ourselves our conceptions and ideas of the Author of eternal salvation to all that call upon Him faithfully. Let us for a moment turn to the vast importance which the advent of CHRIST is revealed to be of in the economy of the world. And here I wish to urge upon you a view of the divine scheme which is frequently propounded in the writings of the ancient Christians.

We are accustomed to read the Holy Scripture as if it merely taught us to seek analogies in created things to the spiritual realities of the gospel kingdom. For example, CHRIST is called in Scripture the Sun of Righteousness—the Dayspring from on High—the Light of the World. Now our fathers in the faith viewed these divine instructions as importing much more than we see in them at the first glance. They bid us conceive of creation as not only casually and fortuitously *adapted* to illustrate Evangelical mysteries, but as given us by GOD on purpose to do so. They tell us that the sun was placed in the firmament with this end and object, to *foretell* CHRIST. They lead us to entertain and meditate

upon the idea that the noble framework of the universe was intended and expressly appointed by the Creator to signify to us the mysteries of the Christian covenant—the sun to signify the Saviour, the moon to represent the Church, receiving light from the sun, deriving her whole importance from the chief light which rules the day, just as the Church has her energy wholly and entirely from her Head. He is **THE** Light whose divine influences extend throughout the universe. In the obscure corner occupied by our sinful but favoured race, the mild radiance of the Church supplies a secondary light which is adapted to our wants, in the absence of the superior luminary, but is powerless without Him, serving to remind us, when we cannot bear the bright effulgence of his rays, of the source of light, and heat, and life. If we adopt for a moment the idea, of which this is an illustration, with what majesty does it present to our notice, the scheme of God for our instruction from the works of creation! When **CHRIST** proclaims Himself the light of the world, it is not so much that He makes the present enjoyment of light subsidiary to our spiritual education in the great things of the Covenant, but He tells us that the light which we feel to be so necessary to our comfort, to our existence, was sent to us to teach us the inestimable value of the light which He brings.

This light, magnificent in its inscrutable nature, universally necessary to our well-being—subtle, cheering, vivifying—is but the precursor and type of the spiritual radiance whereby our souls must be made to live and move, and have their real being. It was not merely an apt illustration by which our Lord awakens our attention to the benefits and joys He came to bring us, but it was sent before and created *on purpose* to prepare our minds for something like a due appreciation of Him

When we had learnt and felt and known how necessary this light was for our happiness in a temporal sense, we are bidden to remember that it was sent to awaken in us the thought, "What think ye of Christ?"—the true light—the everlasting light—the spiritual enlightener of all men and all things. The wonders of creation are not only calculated to lead our thoughts to something beyond when we consider their vastness, their magnificence, their surpassing energies, the varied splendours, they bring before us, and their universal necessity to our happiness; but they were with this end and view and object sent to us, that we might *from them* learn the spiritual lessons they seem to us fitted to convey, that we should be instructed by actual physical experiences in the absolute misery of life without CHRIST, as we feel the dreariness of the absence of natural light. The light that gladdens our eyes is *only* given us that we may eventually learn the joy of CHRIST's presence. The moon lights our path in the absence of the sun, and by its derived power enables us to walk in security, only that we may learn therefrom, that there is but one true source of heat and vigour—that all subsidiary and secondary energies have their ONE source from the glorious orb of day, to whose presence we are all hastening. What think ye then of CHRIST in this aspect? If we endeavour to realize the truth of nature meant to pourtray to us the grandeur of the covenant of mercy, does it not give to our conceptions a freshness and vividness which they had not before? Do not the truths of the Gospel present themselves to us in a more immediate and instant and proximate manner? Do they not become elementary portions of all that is about and around, above and beneath us? And if we would have worthy thoughts of CHRIST, are not such speculations as these, founded as they are in scrip-

tural analogies, fitted to awaken them in our minds? Take another illustration which our Master has given us. "I am the true Vine," saith He, "and ye are the branches." I need not quote the similitude: it must be present to every one's mind. Now the view of the design of creation which we are urging upon you will lead us to such reflections as these: "The particular mode of growth which I observe in the vegetable world, where, from one parent stem, the whole tender and delicate structure is maintained and nurtured, is meant to pourtray to me this grand truth, that all strength and life and health come to me from one source—that I must be united to that fount of energy, if I have life, else I become like the cankered branch, which is to be cut off and cast away. This is not only an analogy, but a type, ordained beforehand of God, to instruct me and tell me the necessity of this method. I see before my eyes the truth, and I am bid to read there that which my Saviour now urges upon me. This method of sustentation and preservation of vigour was intended to convey to my understanding, to force upon me, and prepare me for the great doctrine of the Gospel—that union with the Son of God is my only hope of life—that perpetual supplies of grace are as essential to my spiritual life as the uninterrupted flow of juices from the mother root is to the being of the curiously-wrought plant that I contemplate. What, then, shall I think of CHRIST, when I find His great doctrines mixed up with the economy of creation? Are the truths He proclaims of less vitality to me than the preordained feeble types of them are to the manifest objects in which they are impressed? Of what use is the existence of general laws of growth in the living plant, if the individual before me is not nourished and maintained in the way that universal law prescribes?

What then do I think of CHRIST?—is He to me individually the source of life? Surely I must reflect when the question is sounded in mine ears, What think ye of CHRIST? I must turn anxiously to mine own heart and inquire, Do I THUS think of Christ?"

I cannot conceive a more worthy and noble exercise of contemplation and thought than this, that a man should be placed in the midst of the framework of material creation and told to look around him and search out the secrets of nature, investigate and ponder and discover all that he can of energy and power and relation, the infinite variety of laws that prevail, their oneness and their dissimilitude, their changeful and yet their constant recurrences; and when he has gazed and pored and studied, and is bewildered with the mysteries which he finds, and the endless developments of the one grand pervading idea of contrivance and adaptation, then tell him to stand, and view in all these splendours and intricacies but the shadow and outline of a great scheme for the salvation and redemption of a fallen race; tell him that all that is great and independent and self-regulating is meant to indicate the head and fountain of power and life to the Christian, all that is weak and dependent and upheld, is meant to indicate the fallen race, made to live and move, and look for future being from that head and fountain of life. Tell him that all which he sees, and much more which he does not see, but which he might if he had length of days and vigour of intellect, is not only parallel to and illustrative of the salvation of man, but was given by God to convey to his mind and strengthen him in the persuasion of all these mighty truths, and I say you invest the man's idea of the Christian scheme with an awfulness and a mystery which he could not else have. And when you then propose to him

the question, "*What think ye of Christ ?*" he is most fitted to answer the question in a manner worthy of its importance. He is ready to confess that a scheme of which the handmaids are so various, so infinite in number, so carefully and wonderfully made, is one of whose glories he cannot form estimation, of whose transcendent importance to each individual for whom it is intended, no tongue of man or angel can worthily descant. He is led to entertain higher and more glorious, and therefore more worthy thoughts of the great Head and Founder of Christianity, from whom, as one source, all things flow, by whom, as one sustaining almighty power, all things continue, to whom, as the great conclusion, all things tend. He then sees, in another and more immediate light, that to Him, and by Him, and from Him, are all things; that He is in very deed *all in all*. We are not generally sufficiently impressed with the idea of intimate connexion between all created things and the Son of GOD; we are not sensible of the necessity of making a reference to Him, the perpetual guide of our conduct; and it is from our not having this before our eyes that we are devout only at times, perform acts of religious worship seldom, and at intervals which leave a vast portion of our lives at the disposal of the world. It is from not sufficiently regarding, I will not say the importance, but the awful ubiquity of the Christian scheme in all that is about and around us, that we fail to realize within ourselves what is called the spirit of Christianity. Our lives are not generally such as they would be, if there were one engrossing absorbing endeavour to become what we acknowledge Christians ought to be, if they at all press towards the perfect man in CHRIST, the mark and prize of their calling. To assist in recalling to our minds this constant and unvarying demand, that the

Gospel makes upon the whole length, and breadth, and depth of our actions and our faculties, I wish to urge upon you, how mightily God strives, as it were, in the vast amphitheatre that surrounds you, to impress you with the majesty and comprehensiveness of Christianity; and when you have thought upon this, I would urge you with the question, "*What think ye of Christ?*" leaving you to draw the inference of the estimation in which you should hold the Author and Mover and Substance of a scheme so stupendous, wrought out with such marvellous contrivance, pourtrayed with such vivid lines on the whole face of nature, and pressed upon our attention with such irresistible force.

What think ye of CHRIST? Is He not the Son of God with power, to whom creation bends, as it were, to yield her willing testimony? Is He not mighty to save, who hath kept all things in their singular order, and preserved them in harmonious proportions ever since they came forth from the womb of the shapeless void? Can He be satisfied with partial obedience or an unwilling service, who commandeth the wind and the waves and they obey Him? Can aught escape the exact knowledge of Him, who needeth not that any one should tell Him, for He knew what was *in* man? What think ye of CHRIST? Can His commands be broken, His laws disregarded, and His instructions indolently cast aside? Can we be His, and yet follow our own pleasures, when He has said that we cannot? Can we be His, and seek after riches, when He has said this is impossible? Can we really believe the Articles of our Faith, and yet not strive to make that Faith the code of our lives? *This* is the practical proof of our being sincere. What do we think of CHRIST in this respect, as our ruler and guide, our lord and master? It is not sufficient that we stand

up in the church and call Him Lord, Lord. There be some who will plead this at the day of secret things, to whom our Saviour will turn a deaf ear. There will be some to whom will occur the question put to them on earth, "*What think ye of Christ?*" and they will remember that they thought of Him only as one merciful, tender-hearted, and compassionate, and forgot that He was just and holy and pure, and abhorred iniquity. They will remember that they thought of Him as a redeemer from the penalties of sin, but did not think of Him as having rescued them from its fascinating snares. They think now that they can give their chief time to selfish indulgences and worldly amusements, and be chiefly engrossed with the world of sense, and yet that they may win CHRIST at the last. Fatal delusion! It will sever them from among the just, and deliver them over to the god of this world whom they have served. From having had unworthy thoughts of CHRIST, and the glad tidings that He brought, they lose their opportunity of seeing Him in glory, and knowing the truth of His promises, though His threats they will, alas! find terribly full of truth and reality. And *this* is their error, that they have not thought of CHRIST as the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega of all existences. They have not thought of Him as the way, as well as the truth and the life. They have not thought of Him as one to whom they must be continually united *here*, if they hope for union with Him hereafter. They have cheated themselves with the hope that they might share in the blessings of heaven, and a blissful immortality, while they acknowledged two masters on earth. Now CHRIST, of whom they have thought so unworthily, declares to us, that one supreme dominion alone can exist in our hearts. He will have no proud competitor to sit enthroned there.

“He that is not with me is against me.” We must be ALL on the side of CHRIST, or else we are His rebellious subjects, who, by our departure from Him, declare that we will not have Him to reign over us, and, therefore, if we hope against His declarations, His frequent warnings, His earnest entreaties,—if we cherish, as so many of us do, lingering affections for the things terrestrial and carnal, we have need to be roused with the question,—“What think ye of CHRIST?” Is He a man that can repent? Can He deny himself? Are His solemn recorded decisions on this point subject to reversal? Can we appeal from them? WHAT think we of CHRIST?

Would to GOD we might always remember *who* and *what* our Saviour is! The Man who knew what sin is, and bids us fight against it. The Man who knew what temptation is, and bids us strive when tempted to preserve our integrity. The Man who knew our weakness, and has purchased for us strength, who sympathises with our sorrows, and promises to turn them into joy: yet, withal, GOD, who made the universe,—GOD, who by an inconceivable mystery, ransomed His guilty subjects from the penalties of His own laws,—GOD, who imparts Himself now to all whom He reckons heirs of eternal glory. Though He knows what sin is, yet He is perfect purity. Though He knows what temptation is, yet He is spotless holiness. Though He understands what weakness is, yet He is perfect and limitless power. *This* is the Being who calls us, would gather us to Himself, and grant us untold joys in the mansions He has prepared for those that unfeignedly love Him. This is He of whom creation testifies, of whom Moses and the prophets did write, whose advent was hymned by angels, and rejoiced in by sages,—whose death was mourned by the inanimate rocks,—whose resurrection from the dead has been

preached throughout all the world, and made the seal and earnest of immortality to all who, in sincerity and open-heartedness, embrace His doctrines. He was very God of very God; yet, for us men, and for our salvation, He was made Man, and came down from heaven. All this we know and believe and acknowledge, but we want to act upon it, to *do* what He bids, to *hear* what He says, to *receive* what He sends, to *trust* in His promises. *Thus* must we think of Him, as of one to be listened to, and believed in and obeyed; as of one to be received into our hearts, that He may there reign with undisputed and sovereign power over our affections and desires and thoughts; moreover, as of one who shall come again in glory to judge the quick and dead,—not as once He came in lowliness and humility, but *in glory*, surrounded by the host of heaven, and manifest to all as the ruler of the universe, requiring of us the awful homage that we stand at His bar and be acquitted or condemned, when the books are opened in which our deeds are written, compelling us to undergo the sentence of incorruptible and exact justice. That sentence will cause us either to call on the rocks to cover us, or to shout for joy that our reward is nigh. It will recal to us, with unmistakeable clearness, the fact that in the name of JESUS CHRIST, and in none other, rest all our hopes and anticipations. It will awaken in us reflections on the answer we may this day have returned to the question, “*What think ye of Christ?*”

May GOD mercifully grant, that when our time shall come to die, we may have had inspired into our hearts, such thoughts of CHRIST, that we may have the answer of a good conscience toward GOD, and a well-grounded hope, that when the trumpet shall sound, we shall be called to the right hand of the Majesty on high!

EVERY FAMILY A CHURCH.

• BY THE

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COLOSSIANS IV. 15.

The church which is in his house.

THIS is not the only passage in which St. Paul has spoken of a Christian family and household as forming a church. In the Epistle to Philemon he salutes "the church in his house;" and in the sixteenth chapter and fourth verse of the Epistle to the Romans, he greets "the church which is in the house of Priscilla and Aquila."

In its largest sense the word "church" signifies the universal body of Christian believers, whether in heaven or in earth. The same term is applied to national bodies, as we speak of "the Church of England," or "the Church of Rome." Lastly, a single household of believers is "a church;" and indeed the whole visible church of CHRIST may be contained in a single household; as, for instance, the family of Noah in the ark were at one time the only church of GOD upon earth.

It is not, however, in *name* only, nor merely as containing a body of believers, that a family is properly a church; but in every household, rightly organized and disciplined, there ought to be a representation of the real government of the church. And a consideration of several particulars in which this is true, may serve to give all of us better notions of our duties in our house-

hold; it may teach us to sanctify with a glorious and heavenly character many of those offices of daily life which men are too commonly apt to look upon as of no very great dignity or importance.

If we regard a church as a *building*, its first and most important use is, to be a place for the celebration of the outward service of prayer to GOD; and every man's house ought, in this respect, to be a church. In every dwelling, whose owner desires the blessing of GOD to fall on it, there should be made the constant, daily oblation of prayer. Without this consecrating incense, it is idle to speak of a house as of a building dedicated to GOD.

If we speak of a church as of a *society*, we must admit the necessity of its consisting of various parts; each containing its several just subordinations and degrees. And, as in all societies, more especially in a church, it is necessary that there be a guiding and a governing head, so there must be in every house one head of a Christian family. In the system of patriarchal government, originally established amongst mankind, GOD decreed that the eldest or head of the family should combine in his person the glorious prerogatives of royalty and priesthood. And although subsequent revelations of the divine will, and the altered circumstances of the world have, of necessity, *qualified* this original institution, yet such parts of it as have not been interfered with should undoubtedly be maintained.

When, therefore, we have the example set before us of a church established in a house, it is impossible to take the first and most essential step towards following this example without investing the head of the family with at least so much of the priestly character as renders it his duty, no less than his privilege, to officiate as the priest of his household. What a glorious, but at the same

time what a responsible, dignity is his! He is, or ought to be, the centre of unity in his family, the object of general obedience and respect. He is the person to guide his flock by knowledge and advice; he is bound to explain,—to the best of his ability at least,—the oracles of God to those who depend on him. Much of the happiness or misery of the family must depend on his righteous or wicked management of the things entrusted to his care; and it is foolish to suppose that God should have committed such important offices to the hands of any man without exacting a proportionate responsibility.

And think of the *wisdom* of such a provision! For if every head of a family were to act, as he ought to act, under a deep sense of the importance of the office he fills; if he tried in all things to approve himself the minister and representative of God over his household, doubtless he would speedily meet with a plenteous reward, in the dutiful affection of his children; in the tranquil happiness and beaming faces of his fire-side. Prosperity must come to such a man with ten-fold joy; whereas adversity must fall on his head with diminished and insignificant weight. In the sweet and precious knowledge that his family are all knit together in the bond of Christian affection, and are all sanctified and blessed by the Spirit of God, he has a remedy against every calamity, a shield of defence against every accident, an impregnable fortress against the assaults of the world and the devil.

Think, then, how great and awful is the dignity of every head of a family! And think how terrible must be the condemnation of those who despise or abuse the solemn duties thus imposed on their situation!

Our Saviour was fond of addressing all his followers as members of one household; sometimes calling them

his "little children;" sometimes "his brethren." In his parables He was remarkably fond of comparing Himself to "the master of a house." He has apparently been most anxious to remind us of Himself by the most ordinary household circumstances, so that the daily occurrences of domestic life should ever suggest to us the precepts and example of our Redeemer. The Evangelists have recorded more anecdotes of our blessed Saviour in his domestic character than in any other; and He has often given us rules for our conduct in our household, by presenting us with a perfect pattern of behaviour in Himself.

For instance, at the period when He appeared upon earth, slavery was the condition of a large proportion of mankind; and, of course, much oppression and tyranny was exercised by the strong master over the weak servant. But to warn us not to despise any one for whom *He* died, and to remind us of Himself, CHRIST took upon Him *the form of a servant*, and declared that "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

We read that He discharged the most menial offices towards his own disciples; that He even condescended "to wash their feet" as they sat at table. How touchingly and wonderfully, by this great act of humility, has He not only warned us to be humble, but has taught us to remember that our Saviour and Redeemer was a servant. And he that is blessed with this world's goods, will, if he be wise and righteous, for his Saviour's sake always regard the spiritual no less than the domestic happiness of his servant with a special anxiety and care.

Men appear to have a natural love for their offspring; and, indeed, so active and strong is the power which this affection has over the human breast, that we might fancy it was almost unnecessary to give particular in-

structions, or to enforce with emphatic earnestness and warmth so plain a duty as the care and protection of our children. Yet the history of the heathen world informs us, that so great is the natural lust after power in man, and so deep is his natural corruption, that the laws of nations the most civilized, and enlightened by art and genius, gave to the parent an absolute and irresponsible power over the life of the child; so that to murder a newly born infant was regarded not merely as an inoffensive, but even as a meritorious and patriotic action. But how beautifully has CHRIST taught us to love the infants of our household! commanding us not simply to cherish them for their guilelessness, and to fondle them for the sweetness of their beauty, but exhorting us to regard them with more than earthly affection, "*because of such is the kingdom of heaven!*" so that whenever we gaze with happiness and pride on the faces of the children that dwell around our hearth, we should be reminded of the blissful and glorified innocence of the children of heaven!

Again, we know how little disposed the proud spirit and heart of a man is to yield to the authority, and to submit to the influence of a *mother*. But how beautiful an example of domestic love is furnished to us in the simple and touching expression of the mother of JESUS, that she had sought her son "*sorrowing!*" and in the observation of the Evangelist, that the child went down to Nazareth, and was subject unto his parents! And so we find that, as *He* never failed in the dutiful affection owing to a mother, but even in his last agony on the cross with his dying breath made provision for Mary, and commended her to the care of the disciple whom He loved best; so *she* never forgot or forsook *Him*: but in all his perils seems to have been constantly near Him.

We read that she often sought Him, and even interrupted Him in the business of his ministry, being overwhelmed with anxiety and fear on account of her Son! Finally, we read that, when his disciples had forsaken Him and fled, his mother remained by Him at the foot of the cross, constant even in death, and refusing to desert her Son in the midst of infamy, and humiliation, and torment.

In the love, therefore, that we bear a mother,—in the dutiful submission that we pay to her, let us always remember how CHRIST loved *his* mother, and how that love was repaid; for, oh! there is nothing like a mother's love. The love of *man* may be more ardent, and impetuous, and enthusiastic: but it is the love of a mother alone that never fails or diminishes. Even if the face of a father be set against us, yet the affection of the mother remains unchanged and unwearied—nay, seems to grow stronger when the rest of the world begin to despise or to hate us. It is always a refuge for us against the storms and cruelties of fortune; neither unkindness, nor infamy, nor crime can break it down: but the mother's affection seems to gather intensity in proportion as our claim to it is forfeited.

Thus in every member and department of our household are we taught to remember CHRIST: and by setting before us his example, and so endeavouring to make our family practically and vitally Christian, we shall really have that which Philemon, and Aquila, and Priscilla had—"a church in our house."

Nor, even when we set our foot outside our door, ought we to fail of being reminded of our Christian duties and condition. He that is wise, even in gazing on the flowers of the field, will be reminded of the bounteous and perpetual care of his Father, who condescends

to lavish such prodigality of beauty upon the grass and herbs of the earth; he will remember *who* it is that has commanded him to "consider the lilies how they grow;" and has advised him to reflect, that if the flowers of the field are worthy of God's care, how infinitely more worthy of that care must the soul of man be!

The garden, too, how full is that of holy admonition and divine thought! It was a garden that man inhabited whilst he was yet innocent and unsullied by sin; and truly the flowers of a garden are so fair, and their fragrance so sweet, that they seem fit and intended to be the companions and the delight of innocent and happy beings. They seem to reproach man with his follies and his crimes, and to remind him from how fair an inheritance sin has cast him out!

It was in a garden that our Saviour made his last supplication to his Father for strength to enable Him to undergo the torture of the cross; for fortitude to baffle the power of Satan, and achieve the redemption of mankind. CHRIST has indeed consecrated the shade and solitude of the garden by his victorious prayer. If He has taught us to make our house a church, He has also taught us to make our garden the court of that church. He has sanctified its bowers by prayer, so that along with the fragrance which the leaves and the flowers send forth, the far sweeter incense of the breath of devotion may rise as an acceptable offering to the clouds of heaven.

It was in a garden that our Saviour found his grave; above all, it was in a garden that, after He had burst the fetters of death, He first appeared to the affectionate Mary Magdalene.

Now it is good for us that in our daily and most ordinary occupations we should thus be reminded of CHRIST; that the very air around us should breathe, as

it were, the spirit of the Gospel. Men are too apt to regard their Christian duties and feelings as distinct from the duties and feelings of common life; whereas Christianity, to be vital and saving, must pervade, impregnate, and control our every word and action and thought. It is not a thing to be remembered when we are at church, and to be forgotten in the midst of the business of the world. On the contrary, its influence is then most necessary, and ought to be most prevailing, when we are most occupied with the cares and distractions of life. His is the true Christian frame of mind, who has learned to associate the name of CHRIST with every thing that he does. Such a man enjoys true happiness of heart,—not that boisterous and silly intemperance, which entails speedy repentance; which gains neither the respect of others, nor satisfaction for ourselves; but that cheerful and unruffled peace of mind, which passes the understanding, because it cannot be represented to the imagination of those that are strangers to CHRIST.

By constantly dwelling in our hearts upon CHRIST, and by endeavouring to keep his image and example always before our minds, we shall come to love Him—not as we *ought*, for *that* is impossible, but—with such love as our corrupt and imperfect hearts will admit.

Oh! happy is the household which is a church of CHRIST! and happy, yea, many times happy, is he who dwells with CHRIST!—who, in every work that he does, in every thought of his understanding, in every aspiration of his soul, endeavours so to conform himself to the likeness of a brother of CHRIST, as finally to render himself fit, through the meritorious cross of his Redeemer, to become a member of his glorified family in heaven.

THE WORLD, THE GATE OF HEAVEN.

BY THE

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SCHOOL.

GENESIS XXVIII. 17.

*And he was afraid and said, "How dreadful is this place !
this is none other but the house of God,—this is the
gate of heaven."*

WE must all be familiar with the circumstances to which these words refer. Whose memory will not vividly supply the events of that singular history which the inspired writer has just recorded? The designing mother; the feeble blind old man; the reckless Esau, careless of his heritage, but devoted to the chase; the agitated Jacob, lending himself perhaps with many a blush to execute his mother's treachery, yet beloved of old by GOD, and destined to become the father of a mighty race,—all these are pictured like household forms upon our hearts, and come back to the memory with the freshness of our first early emotions. Who does not tremble for the daring deceiver while the blessing still hangs upon the lips of the irresolute old man, and he doubtfully exclaims, "*The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau !*" What heart does not respond to the agony of that exceeding bitter cry, "*Bless me, even me also, Oh my father !*" Let us then under the influence of such feelings recur once more to these old familiar scenes. Let us in thought rejoin the Patriarch as, flying from an angry brother, he quits his father's

home, and journeys painfully onward to the promised plains of Padan-Aram. The day is far spent: he has traversed many a league companionless and sad, and now at nightfall has paused to seek precarious slumber beneath the shelter of those hospitable rocks. Behind him are the scenes, the occupations, the endearing memories of early youth; before him lie an untried future, a strange people, and a foreign land; around him are the silence and the solitude of the desert. How must the solemnity of such a scene overwhelm the wayfarer as he stands with none but God and Conscience upon that lonely plain! How must the memories of the past crowd thick upon the heart, and strangely mingling with hopes for the future agitate his bosom like a troubled sea, until he seek for peace and confidence in prayer! Judge ye his feelings, my younger friends, who standing upon the confines of youth and manhood, with passions unsubdued, and principles unconfirmed, are about to seek amidst unknown scenes the accomplishment of your earthly fortunes. Did he indulge in idle dreams of bye-gone happiness, and water its tomb with unavailing tears? or was his bosom filled with wild unchastened ambition? Did he surrender himself recklessly to all its onward impulses,—its golden visions of honour, advancement, and eternal fame? No! We may safely infer from the tenor of the sacred narrative, that he gave up his soul with all its tumultuous throbings of hope and fear, and joy and sorrow, unto God. And God accepted the offering of his faithful worshipper. He shed around him the spirit of a holy calm. He brought repose to the brow that was pillowed on those rude stones. He breathed his own peace—"the peace of God, which passeth understanding," into that troubled breast. He removed the film from his earthly eyes, and

gave him to behold the radiant forms of those ministering spirits which waited on his steps, ascending and descending from the throne of God!

And now, my brethren, for in this point lies the practical utility, and the application to ourselves, not to Jacob alone has it been granted to discern these mysteries. Each of you who in the spirit of Jacob worship God, and trust in Him, and turn to Him in loneliness and sorrow as your guide and guardian,—each of you, I say, may feel that his footsteps are on holy ground,—that this is indeed a dreadful place, a solemn world—the gate of heaven, though we know it not. For it is true, nothing can be more true, this world upon which we gaze with such idle eyes—this daily life through which we pass without thought, and without care; yes, these very scenes of common business, strife, and pleasure, all unlovely as they are from the action of stormy passions, avarice, and crime, these are the portals of a new existence. One moment we live and act among them; the next we stand beside the eternal throne. Nor is this all. Here, among these very scenes of which I speak, is determined the direction of our future path. We must take heed whither we bend our steps; now, even now, while we know it not, we are passing through the gate of heaven or hell.

I. For, in the first place, consider, I beseech you, how near us, how very near, is the unseen world with its legions of ministering angels, its bands of spiritual enemies in high places who lie in hourly ambush for our souls. Do not imagine because they are not visible to our earthly perceptions that therefore they do not exist; that they have no interest in, or influence upon human affairs. Sight, hearing, each of our ordinary senses, you will all acknowledge to be imperfect. But

this is not the whole truth. Strange as it may seem, they are so constructed as to veil and darken the perceptive faculties of the mind. If our intellectual nature was freed from the shackles of our earthly nature, our sight and hearing would perhaps exercise their functions throughout the universe of space. But it is because we *have* eyes—that is, eyes of a corporeal organization—that we do *not* see; because we have ears, that we do not hear. If it were not so, we should at once become sensible of agents and operations now invisible, we should know what now we know not, “how dreadful is this place,”—how nigh unto our path is the presence of the Most High! What occurred to him of old whose eyes were opened in answer to Elisha’s prayer? A host had compassed the city with horses and chariots. “Alas, my lord,” exclaims the terror-stricken servant of the prophet, “alas! what shall we do?” He answers, “Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.” And Elisha prayed, and said, “LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see.” The prayer was answered. The LORD opened his eyes, and behold “the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire*.”

When, too, the darkness of death was gathering over the earthly vision of the martyred Stephen; then a wider and more wondrous prospect was granted to his eyes; then, indeed, did he perceive that he stood at the gate of heaven, for, looking steadfastly upward, he exclaimed, “*Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.*”

But why multiply examples? Have we not the testimony of St. Paul that the sufferings of the saints are

* 2 Kings vi.

a spectacle to angels as to men? that we live in the presence of God's ministering spirits, who gaze unheeded on our deeds? Are we not above all assured that the eye of the eternal God, that the never-failing love of CHRIST our Saviour are about us, and around us evermore? And shall not we too, my brethren, with Jacob's holy rapture, say, "*How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the House of God; this is the gate of heaven!*"

II. And again. There is another sense in which this visible world may truly be said to stand in a mysterious, yet intimate relation to the world which is *not* seen. God has created the one to be the type and expositor of the other. He has stamped his attributes on the face of nature, and graven his counsels no less in the book of his works, than in the book of his Word. "*The invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that men are without excuse*.*" Before the days of revelation, God, we are told, had not left himself without a witness, in that "*He did good, and gave rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons,*" and all those external blessings which are showered down in unappreciated abundance upon the life of man. Think not, therefore, that the glory and the splendour of this material world is but a phantasm, and an unreality; an idle pageant framed to awaken wonder, and beguile the sense. No! all has its spiritual meaning and its holy office. "*The heavens declare the glory of God: the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech: night unto night sheweth knowledge.*" Each work of God's that we behold in *this* world, bears the impress of something from *another* world, the things of time and

* Romans i. 20.

nature symbolize the things of eternity, but the darkened eyes of a corrupt generation cannot interpret the characters aright. The seers of Chaldæa read not the handwriting of the God of Israel. Yet to hearts which have learnt that holy lore, it burns in forms of fire on the front of God's visible creation. He, who set his bow in the clouds of heaven, and adorned that sign of promise with a thousand radiant dyes, has not piled up the everlasting hills, or spread abroad the illimitable ocean, without attaching to them also somewhat of a sublime and mysterious meaning. The works of God, then, image forth his attributes and his will. It was not only a grand, but perhaps a true conception of him of old, who proclaimed that "Light was the shadow of the Godhead*."

Therefore, my brethren, standing among all these things, surely in a second sense we stand at the gate of heaven! Our feet are, as it were, chained to earth, but our eyes may gaze upon the distant portals of our eternal home. And who can venture, when the mind adopts this form of religious contemplation, to set limits to that communion with the "soul of things," which it may in its exalted and purified state enjoy? Who shall determine how far it may be enabled to read Nature as the symbol of the Invisible, and detect behind this veil of outward things, the forms and realities of a spiritual world? Or, to adopt the tone of that beautiful fiction once so deeply rooted in the English heart, can we assert that there *never* have been pilgrims who, while still on earth, have won their toilsome way through the Valley of Shadows to the gates of the New Jerusalem; and, as in the evening of life, as they paused upon the summits of the "Delightful Mountains," have not for a moment seen beyond the broad

* Lux est Umbra Dei.

waters of the River of Death, and far in the golden light of sunset, the glittering towers of the Everlasting City?

III. But if there be any who deem such views mystical and untrue, let me remind them that there is yet another sense, an obvious and practical sense, in which this world is to them the gate of heaven. For very falsely do we estimate the importance of our daily life, our common employments and usual sphere of action, if we do not understand that they are the direct and immediate instruments whereby our destiny is connected with the unseen world, and with the future life.

Most men possess very vague and indefinite notions on the subject. They dream of the entrance to eternity as something mysterious, superhuman, and sublime. Their active imagination encompasses the "narrow path" with images of glory and of terror; scenes fraught with wonder; strange temptations to evil, and mighty encouragements to good. They cannot believe that they are quietly to glide away to eternal perdition without some marvellous manifestation of God's power and mercy, to arrest their footsteps in the downward path. And scarce can even the faithful realize to their minds, that it is by the calm and peaceful offering of a holy life, spent in the ordinary occupations of mankind, that they are to win their way to the goal almost beyond their hopes, — salvation and everlasting happiness! The spirit of the Syrian Naaman dwells within our bosom, and influences our sentiments. We look that the LORD should ordain some *great* thing, and then we promise to obey. We despise the Jordan of GOD, and fly for succour to the rivers of Damascus. The Abana and Pharpar of our own imaginations are better than all the healing waters of Israel. But oh! surely, my dear brethren, there must be some deep and dangerous delusion

here. This very world in which we live, and move, and act, and finally are to die—this earthly scene which we profane so often by ungoverned passions, by base desires, by idle and impious folly—this is, after all, a fearful, and a solemn spot—the house of God, the gate of heaven—and we know it not. Yet woe unto us, unless sooner or later we realize the all-important truth. Be assured no new order of things will arise around us for our conversion; no celestial splendour will burst in upon our lives; no wonderful and terrible manifestation of GOD's power will be vouchsafed to guide our steps, like the beacon cloud which blazed before the march of wandering Israel. No! we have Moses and the prophets, and if we hear not them, neither would we be persuaded though one rose from the dead! Acknowledge then this truth, strange as it may seem. Now, even now, you stand at the gate of heaven or hell. Your commonest actions, your lightest words, may determine through which portal you are to pass. For single actions, however trifling, lay the foundation of habits: and habits, form the moral and spiritual character; and in exact accordance with the nature of that character will our lot be cast for eternal perdition, or eternal joy.

Strange, in truth, are the misconceptions which most men entertain of a future state. They, indeed, regard it as a translation from sin, and toil, and sorrow, to a state of unmixed beatitude; but they do not appear to consider that it can have any reference or relation to the past existence. They do not know that from reason, revelation, and analogy, we alike infer that the feelings and affections of a new existence will not be new and unknown feelings, but the perfected condition of those which have already actuated us in human life.

Men will not simply be rewarded with the happiness

of heaven, because they have fulfilled the law of God; but heaven will be happiness, because the law of God can there be perfectly and without obstruction fulfilled. True! no eye hath seen, no ear hath heard, no human heart hath conceived the rapture that shall dwell within the bosom of GOD's saints, as they stand before his throne; free from the shackles of earth, free for the unimpeded exercise of love, and praise. But think you, my brethren, that *they* will ever be among the number of that heavenly host to whom on earth the task of prayer and praise is insipid and distasteful? We shall carry with us to another world the emotions and sentiments of this. The tendency of our *past* life will develope, and expand itself in our *future* life. We *are*, even now, the germ of what we *shall* be. This is the consideration which renders of such fearful importance the great truth on which I now insist. The world *is* the gate of heaven, though we know it not. Differences in opinion or practice, which we now deem unimportant, may grow and gather strength, and finally terminate in the *fearful* difference between salvation, and eternal death. Two lines originally diverging at a very small angle may, as they extend onward through illimitable space, become immeasurably distant from each other. Two souls exhibiting at first but a slight variation in religious principle, may, as they live on into eternity, be finally separated by that impassable gulf which yawned between the spirits of Dives and of Lazarus. So it is, one prayer to God against temptation, one holy resolution, may, through God's assisting grace, form the lowest link in that golden chain which, as the Pagans fabled, rests upon the Earth, but has its summit bound to the throne of Heaven. And, alas! the converse too is true. As it is with good, so it is with evil. "Age," says a famous

writer of the seventeenth century*, “doth not rectify, but incurvate our natures, turning bad dispositions into worser habits, and bringing on incurable vices. Every day as we grow weaker in age, we grow stronger in sin. Every sin the oftener it is committed, the more it acquireth of the quality of evil; as it succeeds in time so it proceeds in degrees of badness,—for as they proceed they ever multiply, and like figures in arithmetic the last stands for more than all which went before it.” Therefore, my brethren, is it not clear that we may so advance in evil, and assimilate ourselves to its essence, that it becomes no exaggeration to say, even in this life we may imbibe somewhat of the feelings of the condemned, and bear about within our bosoms that Hell to which our steps are tending. Let me then press upon you the inevitable inference. Do you who are called Christian men and Christian women, who profess the Christian’s hope, and trust hereafter to participate in the Christian’s joy,—do you recognize and realize in your own hearts the day-spring of that holy love to God which in a future existence shall kindle, and expand itself into the happiness of heaven? Do you feel that with your present sentiments and feelings it *would* be happiness to dwell for ever in the presence of your Redeemer? Do you feel that each ordinary action in the daily duties of your life is exercising an influence on your eternal destiny? Do you know that your determinations for good or evil, trivial as they may seem to you, are scanned with earnest eagerness in another world, are the subjects of rejoicing to the angels of God or to the fiends of hell? Oh, if you are strangers to all these reflections, be assured there is a dangerous delusion working in your hearts,—you

* Sir T. Browne.

stand in the house of God,—beside the Gate of Heaven,—and yet you know it not !

IV. And finally, there is a last sense, more plain, more certain, more literally true, in which we may with Jacob consider this lower world as the Gate of Heaven ! For the world contains the Church, which is the house of God,—and the Church blessed with the promise of the Saviour's presence through all time, and communicating to her members by the holy sacraments, at the least, one great aliment of the spiritual life, may well be called the gate of heaven and entrance to Eternity.

If we, the children of her bosom, gaze with filial love and confiding faith upon her lineaments, doubt not but that we shall read therein the image, and impress of divinity ! In her teaching we shall recognize the voice of God,—in her frame and constitution, the work of his wisdom,—in her sacraments and ordinances, those certain signs, and effectual witnesses of the life beyond, which are at once the type, and the assurance of better things to come. As the appointed keeper, and witness of that holy writ which is alone the standard of the faith, the conservator of God's holy mysteries, she offers no dim and shadowy conceptions of futurity, but mirrors, as it were, within herself a faint, yet faithful image of the coming glories of the saints. It is impossible now to speak adequately on this great topic. Volumes might be written on those relations between ourselves and the unseen world which the Church discloses to our view. But the power of perceiving them depends not upon the intellect, and is not the subject of intellectual teaching. It is the result of purity of life, and obedience to the Gospel law. They alone who do the will of God, shall rightly understand the counsels of God. And oh, may He grant us grace to become proficient in that divine

learning! Then, but not till then, shall we understand the lesson so unintelligible to careless and irreverent minds, namely, what is the real nature, and import of CHRIST's Church on earth. Then, but not till then, when we tread within the circle of her influences, shall we hear a voice in our own hearts declare, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground!"—then, indeed shall we exclaim, "*Here* is none other but the house of GOD,—*here* is the gate of heaven!"

And now, my friends, I have trespassed long upon your time. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter! The days of Angel visitants, of direct manifestations, of divine interpositions, are at an end. They *have* been, and they may perchance be again, but they are not *now*. The palpable presence of Divinity is not vouchsafed to startle our human senses, and warn or encourage the servants of God. We shall not with Balaam behold in our pathway the angel and the gleaming sword; nor with Moses gaze upon the wondrous bush as it burns with unconsuming fire; we shall not, like Samuel, hear the heavenly Voice breathed in the calm of midnight upon the slumbers of that holy child; nor again shall we be arrested in our course by the light of that insufferable glory which shone down upon Saul as he journeyed to Damascus. But we have endeavoured to shew that there are other means appointed for the same end. Yes! even here below, while standing at the gate of heaven, we may receive intelligible indications of that Divinity which compasses us around, and enjoy a real communion with the World of spirits. If we seriously reflect that we in very truth are dwelling in the presence, and under the ministrations of unseen Beings from the hosts of heaven or hell; if we feel that this

beautiful creation spread abroad before our eyes is not a mere mass of material elements, but a type and symbol of the eternal Godhead; if we believe that our common daily acts are the steps in that ladder by which we climb to the kingdom of God, or descend to the kingdom of Satan; if, finally, we recognize in the Church militant below, the image and earnest of the Church triumphant above, and seek from her teaching that spiritual vision which can discern, though darkly as in a glass, the things beyond the veil,—then, my dear brethren, whatever be our circumstances in life, whatever our locality on earth, we may pause and say to our own hearts with awe, *This is indeed a dreadful place,—this is none other but the house of God, this is the gate of heaven!*

For, reflect but for a moment! If this were literally and physically true, were it possible that in the universe of space a spot might actually be found where the human eye could realize the vision of Patmos,—survey the ramparts of the New Jerusalem, and tell the towers thereof,—how would you all unceasingly rush onward through toil, and weariness, and peril, to catch but one glimpse of the celestial Apocalypse; to gaze, though it were but for a moment, upon the “walls of jasper,” and the “gates of pearl!” Would not the wide earth echo to the anxious cry of those inquiring “*Where?*” Oh! be not then dull and insensible of heart when we (as God’s Ministers) answer “*Here.*” *Here*, where you live, and move, and act; amid familiar objects, and well-known scenes. *Here*, around your footsteps, and besides your homes; in the silent plain, in the crowded city, in your daily duties, and your common life; and, above all, *here* in the church and house of God! Oh! may He grant us a right understanding and appreciation of these truths.

May He some day vouchsafe to us as among the number of his elect, the glorious Vision, and the ineffable Joy! May we be partakers in a privilege like that granted of old to Jacob, and promised to him, the Israelite without guile. Behold! "*Thou shalt see greater things than these! Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man**."

* John i. 51.

GOOD FRIDAY.

BY THE

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ST. JOHN XIX. 30.

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

I HAVE not selected these words with the intention of leading you to attempt to realize, by any effort of your imagination, the sufferings of our blessed Redeemer. The circumstances of his passion are so shocking, the sacredness of his character, and the awful majesty of his person, united with the fact that all He did, and said, and suffered, had as near and as close a connexion with every one of us, and was as truly done for our sakes, as if we had been all the while standing beside his cross—these thoughts strike the spirit dumb, and make the imagination tremble and faint; and the mind which feels free and at liberty on any other subject, is prostrate, and silent, and confounded, at the recollection of that fearful hour when the sacrifice was offered without spot unto GOD, and the holy, harmless, undefiled Lamb was slain, and the great High Priest of our profession cried, “It is finished:” and “bowed his head and gave up the ghost.” Ill indeed should we be prepared for the meditations proper for this solemnity if we felt any disposition to allow our imaginations to forget the sacredness of the subject. Rather let us, my brethren, contenting ourselves with the simple narra-

tive which the Holy Ghost inspired the Evangelists to draw up for our instruction, endeavour to occupy our thoughts with such practical considerations, as will help us forward in our pilgrimage to that heavenly home and abiding city, which He who died upon the cross is now gone to prepare for us. For if it be true, that Christianity is a practical religion, and that none of its doctrines are ever really comprehended except by him that receives them practically, if this be so, doubly certain is it with regard to the doctrine of the Atonement of CHRIST, and every thing connected with it. He that does not understand that doctrine practically, does not understand it at all. And really, on this solemn occasion, when our minds have been occupied for some days with the history of the last hours of that life which He laid down for our sakes, every one who has a heart to love Him, and to feel grateful for his love, will feel little inclination for any other considerations, than such as are calculated to bring his heart and his conduct under the habitual influence of such principles as ought to govern one, who believes that the eternal Son of GOD has shed his precious blood to redeem him.

There are two practical errors, which men, who do not deny the atoning nature and merit of the death of CHRIST, are apt to fall into, with regard to the perfection of his sacrifice.

The former is that of those who, however willing they appear to be to acknowledge its value and perfection, do really think it necessary that something should be added and done in order to expiate the wrath of GOD.

The other is that of those who, from the perfection of CHRIST's Atonement, either believe, or affect to believe, that no duties devolve on us in consequence,

except to believe the statements of Holy Scripture and to acquiesce in what was then done on our behalf.

I. With regard to the former of these errors; to suppose that the Atonement, which was offered by the Son of GOD upon the Cross, needs any thing to give it perfection as an expiation for sin, or that we miserable sinners and worms of the earth can, by any thing that we can do, add to its infinite value, is an error so fearful, that one only wonders how any one who believes Him to be the Son of GOD, or who is conscious of his own guilt and demerit in the sight of his Creator, could ever have been induced to give it a moment's entertainment. But besides this, surely it is plain, that our repentance, though it be never so sincere, can, in its own nature, have no more effect in undoing the mischief we have done to our souls by sin, than it can have in undoing the mischief we do to our worldly affairs by imprudence and misconduct. Repentance will not bring back again a fortune dissipated and lost by extravagance, or restore that health which has been wasted and destroyed by evil courses. Remorse cannot undo what is past. Repentance can indeed affect our conduct for the future; but what is done and past it has no power to touch. And with regard to our present conduct, supposing it to be absolutely and perfectly conformed to the Divine Law—which it never is—still, what we do now, is no more than what it is our duty to do now. But we are not perfect. The best of Christians is frail and a sinner, and reaches not beyond a general and habitual integrity of love to GOD and obedience to the law of CHRIST. Surely, then, supposing this to be the character of any of us, the general integrity of our conduct cannot atone for our daily imperfections. And if so, how much less for what is past? The truth is, we have sinned

against God; and it is impossible that any thing we can either do or suffer can atone for our transgressions. But yet many persons forget this. How many, for example, are there who seem to think when they are in sickness and affliction that what they are suffering is atoning for their past sins. How many others, who imagine that by the present decency and decorum of their conduct they are cancelling the former years of frivolity and vice. So they may, as far as the judgment of their fellow-sinners is concerned. But, since what we are doing now, is at best no more than our present duty, however our merciful God may be pleased to accept our repentance on account of the merits of the sacrifice of CHRIST, our repentance and our present good conduct have no efficacy nor power in themselves to satisfy his offended justice. Nothing can suffice to take away our sins, or contribute in the remotest degree towards taking them away, but the precious blood of CHRIST. We can do nothing whatever for ourselves in this matter. It is presumption and impiety to attempt it.

But it is equally erroneous to suppose, that the atonement offered on the Cross can need any thing to give it completeness as a sacrifice. It seems wonderful how any one who had ever read the Epistle to the Hebrews, could fall into such a mistake. For, if there be meaning in words, it is evident that we are there taught to consider that sacrifice as having effected all that we can need to reconcile us to God; and in fact all that could be effected by a sacrifice of any sort. For, since He who thus died for us was no other than the eternal Son of God, if the sacrifice He offered was incomplete, it could only be so because God had intended it should be so. But all the language used in Holy Scripture goes to this one point, that what was then done and suffered was

perfect and complete. He hath appeared once to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He hath brought us nigh by the blood of his Cross; He has reconciled us to God. He has destroyed the enmity; He has blotted out the hand-writing that was against us. We are sanctified through the offering of the body of JESUS CHRIST once for all: by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. By his own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Such language as this can have but one meaning; namely, that, for the atonement and expiation of human guilt, every thing has been done, finished, and completed; and nothing now remains except to communicate to the contrite, and humble, and sincere, the benefits which were then purchased. When we draw nigh, therefore, to the Lord's Table, it is not with the vain presumption, that we there repeat or continue that one great and perfect sacrifice. God forbid! On the contrary, it is just because there is now no longer any sacrifice for sin, and because we have been reconciled to God and justified by the blood of CHRIST, that we are invited to draw nigh to the table of our heavenly Father, not as trembling guilty sinners, uncertain whether the offering we shall bring may suffice to expiate his wrath, but with full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, even the heavenly washing of his Holy Spirit. We approach to commemorate that one and only sacrifice, to crave at our Father's hands the pardon of our daily sins and infirmities; and, being invited to his table as his guests and children, we draw nigh at his bidding, to feed, in our hearts, by faith, on that bread which came down from heaven, the heavenly and spiritual food and sustenance of the most precious body and blood of his

dear Son. Oh, how wonderful it is that any one can refuse to approach, when He invites and commands them to draw nigh. And how wonderful, also, that any one, who has any perception of his own vileness and worthlessness, any consciousness of the hourly imperfection of everything he does, or any just sense of the infinite dignity of that Holy One who offered Himself to GOD for us, can for a moment dream, when he is summoned to such a heavenly feast, that anything he can do can avail to atone for sin, or can be needed, if it could avail.

II. But there is another error against which we are to guard, and one no less dangerous than the former. It is the error of those who lose sight of the duties which do really devolve on us, in consequence of the Atonement of CHRIST. There are some persons who justify this conduct by a religious system and theory: others, who, while they acknowledge to themselves they are doing wrong, continue to silence and satisfy their consciences.

1. There are some who, when we press on them the necessity of a Christian life, take refuge in a system. They tell us that the work of CHRIST is finished; and that to urge them to holiness is to attempt to bring them into bondage to the law, and to deny the freedom of Divine grace. Now, certainly, if we form our notions of the freedom of Divine grace from the New Testament, we shall be led to take a very different view of the subject. If, for example, we are contented to be taught by that great apostle St. Paul, who was the most illustrious preacher of the grace of GOD of whom we have any record, it will be impossible for us to fall into such an error. Is there any part of Holy Scripture which does, in more magnificent and sublime language, extol

and magnify the riches of the mercy and love of God, than the Epistle to the Ephesians? Read it for yourselves, and see, whether it does not, with equal force and clearness, insist on the practice of Christian virtue in all the details of the various relations of life. So that, so far from the inspired writers giving any sanction to the idea that the perfection of the Atonement absolves us from the necessity of obedience to the law of God, it is perfectly clear that the love of CHRIST, in thus dying for us, is set forth in Holy Scripture, not as a release from duty, but as a motive and a ground for obedience, and that from a higher and more spiritual obedience than was ever before required from the human race. And, in truth, the design of the death of CHRIST was not merely to reconcile us to God; it was also to sanctify us by infusing into our hearts a new principle and an all-powerful affection, and by drawing our desires and affections into a willing subjection to his blessed Spirit. He gave Himself for us, not only to avert the just displeasure of our offended Father, but that He might also redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us to Himself, a peculiar people zealous of good works.

Such is the doctrine of the Bible. He who sees in the death of CHRIST merely a sacrifice, and not a rule, an example, a motive, and an obligation, sees but one half: and what he does see, he mistakes and misunderstands. For the object of His atoning for our sins, was not merely to save us from wrath, but to bring us into union and fellowship with God, to enable us to glorify Him here by the imitation of his holiness, and to render us meet to stand in his presence, and capable of enjoying the delights of his holy kingdom; "meet," as St. Paul speaks, "for the inheritance of the saints in light."

2. But there are many who will acknowledge the

truth of all I have been saying, and are yet never the nearer to that character which the Word of God requires from us as children of the light, and heirs of a heavenly kingdom. And, perhaps, if we could see into their hearts, we should find they are persuading themselves, that the love of God renders their salvation secure. They do not perhaps ever put their thoughts into any regular form; but if they did, this would be substantially what they believe.

These men will commit sin; and then they will repent of it; and then they will run into the same temptations, and commit the same sins again. And if they would ask themselves, how it is they can persist in this wretched course of doing and undoing,—returning back one day, as far as they proceeded the day before; if they would look a little deeper into their hearts, they would find at bottom a presumption that, since CHRIST had died for them, they cannot eventually perish. And this is true, not only of persons who are in the habit of indulging in pleasures they acknowledge to be sinful, or yielding to violences of temper which they know to be offensive to the spirit of their meek and lowly Master:—it is equally true of a class which we are likely to find in greater numbers in the House of God. I mean, persons who are decent and respectable in their conduct, and who do really and habitually act in several particulars from religious motives, but yet, after all, are for ever procrastinating and deferring, and live and die half Christians, with clearness enough of perception to make them dissatisfied and wretched, but with indecision and indolence enough to prevent them from being happy, or at peace with their own conscience. How is it possible, that people can go on from day to day and from year to year *in this unworthy and unmanly indecision?* How is it

possible they can have sense enough of duty, and perception enough of truth, to make them miserable, and yet stop short without acting on their convictions, although they know in their hearts they never can be happy until they are wholly devoted to God? It is anything but easy to explain the phenomena of human inconsistency; but I do believe, that these people do generally contrive to quiet their consciences and to preserve the slumbers of their indolence from being altogether destroyed, by their false notions of the love of God. They do think, that CHRIST loves them too well to destroy them,—that He loves them too well to pronounce that word “depart from me,” or to banish them for ever from his presence. And, withal, they have a confused notion, that some time or another they will take the decided step and give themselves wholly to God; or that in their last moments, the Spirit of God will enable them to make up for the indolence of their whole lives. Miserable infatuation! Who has told you that you will have any last moments for repentance? Who has secured you against being smitten down in a moment by the sword of a sudden and unforeseen death? Who has told you that the very first touch of sickness may not put an end for ever to the possibility of repentance?—that the fires of a fever may not destroy your intellect, or some stroke of palsy may not deprive you in an instant of consciousness, and sense, and reason? But, however that may be, your notions of the love of CHRIST are utterly false and groundless. You think of his love as of that blind and partial affection to your particular person, which connives at what it condemns. You think his love cannot be wholly destroyed by your misconduct; but that, do as you will, when it comes to the last, He will save you. There is not a particle of truth in such a notion.

It is the righteous whom God loves, and his love to sinners is not a connivance at their sin. He loved them, and gave Himself for them: but the strength and power of his love makes Him irreconcilably opposed to iniquity. He loves us, not in order that He may tolerate our sin, but that He may save us from sin. He loves the sinner, and therefore He died for the ungodly; not as an act of weak partiality, but that He might render it possible to transform the sinful soul into a resemblance to his own heavenly goodness and purity. As long as the sinner is reclaimable, the LORD is still patient and long-suffering,—ready to forgive his past transgressions, and blot out their remembrance for ever. But it is impossible He can take pleasure in sin. It is impossible He can for ever retain in his family the disobedient and untractable. The very power and strength of his love, which bears every provocation as long as there is any hope of making us better, revolts from the heart that wilfully trifles with it, and will for ever exclude and separate the soul that persists in refusing to take advantage of the purposes of his goodness. Every time we trifle with the mercy of God, we provoke Him; and the very power and greatness of that love, which bears such provocation from those for whom He has shed his blood, is that which makes it absolutely impossible that He can bear with it for ever. For what He loves is goodness, and He loves the sinful soul because it can be changed into the image of his goodness. Goodness is the end of his love; and if we will not submit our souls to be conformed to his will, we render ourselves incapable of being loved by Him, and make it physically impossible that we could exist in that eternal kingdom, where the “spirits of the just made perfect” shall have their union and communion with their Heavenly Father *and with his blessed son, JESUS CHRIST.*

Once more, then, my beloved brethren, let us turn our eyes to the Cross, and consider who it is that hung there, and why He was nailed to that tree of shame and agony. It was our sins that nailed Him there. Not a sin that we have ever committed but was naked and manifest to his sight. And now, as to yourselves,—how long do you intend to be half-Christians? How long do you intend, while the Spirit of God speaks to your inmost hearts, to say, “All very true, and very right,” and then go your ways, as if you had not heard his voice? I entreat you, trifle no longer. The vows of God are upon you: you are not your own; you are bought with a price: and while you are dreaming on, and utterly wasting the only hours you will ever have wherein to prove your love and gratitude to your dying Redeemer, eternity is speedily approaching; the sands in your hour-glass are swiftly running out; your hours are numbered: and, even if you should save your souls, you never can undo what is past; you never will. The fact will remain for ever, that JESUS CHRIST loved you, and gave Himself for you; that you knew He loved you; that you presumed in his love; and that you trifled and dreamed away the hour in which his eye was observing whether you loved Him who first loved you, and were endeavouring to glorify Him with your bodies and spirits, which are his.

THE MOURNER COMFORTED;

A SERMON PREACHED BY THE

RIGHT REV. AUBREY GEORGE,

LORD BISHOP OF JAMAICA,

IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE,
AT THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE FEMALE ORPHAN ASYLUM,

MAY 10, 1846.

ST. JOHN XI. 31.

She goeth to the grave to weep there.

THE whole compass of history, sacred or profane, can scarcely present to our imaginations a scene of a more touching character, than that to which these words convey their mournful contribution. The sudden death of Lazarus, an early friend of our blessed Saviour; the deep affliction of his desolate sisters; the cordial sympathy of their countrymen, and the memorable tears of Jesus when reflecting on the melancholy fate of our corrupted nature, compose a picture over which many a devout Christian has bowed his head in sorrow.

But there are times and accidents which bring this picture home to our remembrance with more than ordinary distinctness. There are times which no traveller through this scene of pilgrimage and mutability can hope to escape, in which the sad bereavement of some loved object reminds us of the reality of those sufferings over which the tears of the Son of God fell, remits us from the house of festivity to the house of mourning, or sends us forth from the company of men to hold imaginary converse with the departed spirits, when, with the solitary feelings of the afflicted Mary, we seek

seclusion from the society of our living companions, and “go,” like her of old, “*to the grave to weep there.*”

Blind must we be, my brethren, to all that passes around us, deaf to the sounds of woe which are borne on every gale that blows upon us, if we perceive not that the world is filled with these sorrowful images, and that human life is composed of little more than melancholy feelings, arising from the remembrance of deceased friends, or from the consciousness of our own mortality. In vain do we seek to banish, amidst scenes of animation and of joy, the recollections and the presages of death. In vain do we invite the harp and the viol to our feasts, and strive to drown, amidst the sounds of merriment, the voice of conscience and the knell of doom. In vain do we court in the lap of pleasure, or the embraces of affection, an antidote to the care that scowls upon us,—the fatal arrow is in our side, the seeds of disease and destruction are in our bosom. Our fathers are dead,—the playmates of our boyish hours are before us in the tomb, and every year of life prolonged serves but to realize our wretchedness, and to direct us more frequently and fondly “*to the grave to weep there.*”

To be told that the afflictions which we bear, the sickness which we suffer, and the termination of existence which we dread, are the common lot of all men, presents to my mind no shadow of relief or consolation. Is grief alleviated by the consideration that it affects our friends as much as ourselves? Is pain mitigated by the knowledge of its universal application? Does the sailor who sobs his last sigh on the midnight waves, or the soldier who perishes amidst the thousands strewn beside him on the battle-field, acquire consolation in his latest agonies from the reflection that that which he endures

is the fate of his boon companions? No; miserable comforters are they who suggest no other topics of comfort to the miserable than the extension of their sorrows and their sufferings to all to whom they are related and endeared.

There are those, it is true, who affect to fortify our hearts with a more specious covering of philosophy; who tell us that the end of existence is not to be feared; that "the sense of death is most in apprehension;" that "cowards die many times before their death, while the valiant never taste of death but once;" that "death when it does come is annihilation—is nothing;" that "we are such stuff as dreams are made of, and our life is rounded with a sleep;" and who, like the enthusiasts of the last century, have consecrated in their hearts the delusive statue of eternal repose.

I am not aware, my brethren, that to a mind rightly instituted, to a mind whose natural tendency is to immortality, this principle of extermination, if it could be mathematically demonstrated, could afford the slightest satisfaction. In the hour wherein I bend in speechless sorrow over the agonizing throes of my dying friend and benefactor,—in the hour wherein I heap the ashes on a father's grave, or read upon a mother's monument the heart-rending record of her tenderness and virtues,—it soothes me not to think that those beloved objects are now as senseless as the clay I tread upon, that they are resolved into the dust, of which man, "of the earth earthy," was originally composed. It soothes me not to think that the spirit of intelligence and affection with which I have held a blessed converse on the earth has now lost its identity, and is commingled with the howling elements; that the lips which have caressed, and

the eye which hath wept over me, and the heart which has loved me with its fondest tenderness, and the bosom to which I clung with instinctive energy when ushered into the cold, cold atmosphere of this desolate world; that these have all lost for ever their informing soul; that their companionship with the foul things of the earth, with the icy worm, and the accursed spoilers of the tomb, is their only heritage, and that nothing remains for me but to go with desperate powerlessness "*to the grave, and weep there.*"

Thanks be to GOD, my Christian brethren, ours are nobler privileges, and richer sources of consolation. It is from that grave in which our mortal hopes lie buried that our glorious hopes of immortality arise; it is at that grave in which moulder the remains of those we loved and cherished as our own flesh that we are told by the chosen Apostle of our Lord to sorrow not as others who have no hope; it is from that grave the words of our incarnate Saviour still vibrate on our ears: "I am the Resurrection and the Life: whosoever believeth in Me shall never die!"

Down to the dust, then, my brethren, with the unworthy maxim of the Epicurean,—"*Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!*" Down to the dust with the unworthy terror of a powerless enemy, whose sting is torn from him! With this faith, we may meet him unappalled by the broadest exhibition of his cruel attributes; with this faith, we may tread in panoply complete the lowest valley of his gloomiest shadows; with this faith, death is but an advantageous change of habitation, since "*to us who live in CHRIST, to die is gain.*"

"Weep not for me, but for yourselves," was the pathetic reply of our Divine Master to the few compas-

sionate daughters of Jerusalem who followed Him with bitter but unavailing tears to the dismal scene of Calvary. If the lips now closed in death could give utterance to the wishes of the departed spirit, such would be the injunctions that would issue from the grave of many a parent, whose forlorn daughters have found an asylum in this house of mercy, for the sustainment of which I am presently to plead. For the dead who are departed in CHRIST we are to offer thanksgivings, but the living offspring claim both our prayers and our charity for their preservation. The one, if gone in CHRIST, are already numbered with the *saved*,—have passed from death to life, and shall never come into condemnation; the other are still in that uncertainty, which a state of trial under the most hopeful circumstances must imply. The ultimate fruits of faith, obedience, and the imputed righteousness of the great Redeemer, exemption from suffering, freedom from sin, the pure vision of their Heavenly Father, joy, joy with angels in the presence of God, are the portion of the one for ever; while care, anxiety, pain, the arduous task of treading the straight and narrow road, and working out upon it with fear and trembling their own salvation, remain with the other.

And it is in behalf of these children whose early orphanage has deprived them, at the most critical period of their being, of the advantages of a parent's care, and cast them at the commencement of their history, when, in "the morn and liquid dews of life, contagious blastments are most imminent" on the broad theatre of a rude and merciless world, that this Institution was raised, and your bounty is this day solicited. It is to shelter those young daughters of affliction, certainly from want and suffering, and too probably from threatening infamy and ruin, that these walls have been erected,

and this Zoar created in the wilderness for their place of refuge and protection.

And the consideration which will go further than any other to endear this asylum to every reflecting Christian is, that while it provides for the temporal wants and interests of its inmates, its main efforts are directed to secure, by a Christian and virtuous education, the happiness of their immortal souls. It meets them at the hour of their deepest grief,—it counteracts not only the secular effects of that calamitous visitation which has left them fatherless, but it supplies them with an everlasting antidote to the fear of death,—it receives them, but it does not leave them at “the grave to weep there.” No; while it opens to them an immediate asylum for the absolute want with which they are assailed, it speaks to them of those eternal mansions where alone “tears shall be wiped from every eye, and where there shall be pain and sorrow no more.” It tells them, as the only balm for human adversity, and as the only foundation of human duty, of that Gospel by which their conduct in the world is to be governed, and their hopes in heaven to be assured. It teaches them at the time when their hearts are most malleable, that law of the LORD which is an undefiled law, converting the soul, and that guiding, sanctifying, and unerring wisdom, which giveth life to them that have it. While such temporal learning as is useful and necessary for the humble stations in which the lot of these orphans is apparently cast, is amply communicated, the principal care of this excellent Institution is to give them that vitalizing knowledge of the truth, and that moral training in the way in which they should go, which shall make them, in all humility and industry, followers of Him “who did no wrong, neither was guile found in his mouth.”

And here let me admonish you, my youthful hearers, who are old enough to understand these things, that you be careful to profit by this instruction, on which the whole respectability, welfare, and happiness of your future lives must depend. Some of you have been led hither, from once happy homes, through scenes of deep affliction, by which it was the merciful intention of God that your hearts should be made better, and that you should be brought closer to Him in time that you might be for ever with Him in eternity. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you—but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of CHRIST'S sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." These afflictions spring not from the dust; they are sent to chasten, to improve, to perfect you through suffering; they could not, it is true, expiate your sins, for "it cost more to redeem your souls," and you must leave that alone to your blessed Saviour for ever; but they may have been the chosen instruments to soften your hearts, to wean them from vanity, to consecrate them to holiness, "to fill them with joy and peace in believing." How, then, has this work been wrought in you? What has adversity done to improve your religious character? Has yours been "the sorrow of the world which worketh death," or have you wept for your sins as well as for your losses, with "that godly sorrow which worketh repentance not to be repented of?" You have been exiled from an earthly home where, perhaps, your heart was too fondly garnered up to consist with your real spiritual happiness. Have you learned to fix your affections on that better home prepared for you, that "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, whose builder and maker is

God." You have lost an earthly father, to whom you looked for the supply of this world's goods, which are mutable, and perish in the using. Are you ready to repair that loss by redoubled love to that Almighty Parent who not only gave you all that you can enjoy of life, and breath, and being, and all things, but who gave for your redemption his own beloved Son, and who with Him will also, if you believe in Him, freely give you all things that are essential to your real felicity?

In the world you will find enough of duties to be done, and a large portion of your time, your strength, your energies, must be due to that calling in which your means of living must be found; but while you are "careful about many things," and are "cumbered with much serving," you will still have leisure and opportunity for apprehending, like the Mary of the text, the "one thing needful," and for choosing and prosecuting that good part which shall not be taken from you.

Blessed be God that He has given you the means of "knowing in this your day the things which belong unto your peace, before they are hidden from your eyes." Blessed be that merciful dispensation by which He has chastened and corrected you, forgiven you your sins, and placed you in a sanctuary where you may be taught that good and right way on which you shall not stumble. But oh! reflect and let it not be the mere reflection of the moment, but an affecting and permanent admonition, that there is forgiveness with the LORD, that He may be feared. To "hear the groaning of the prisoner," to "loose those who are appointed to die," is described by the Psalmist as the delightful occupation of the LORD, when from heaven He beholds the earth. But the prisoner must be sensible of his imprisonment and groan for help before he can be heard; the sinner must repent before

his bonds can be loosed, or his condemnation stayed. God is indeed a GOD of mercy, the source, the strength of consolation, the father to the fatherless, and the widow's stay; but it is only to those that trust in Him that He reveals Himself in these auspicious characters. This clear perception of our dependence on God is essentially necessary to our alliance with Him here and hereafter, and regards alike those that are able to give and those that are reduced to receive the gifts of charity, the most opulent and the very poorest of the race of man.

Brethren, when prosperity is your lot; when the voice of health and happiness are in your domestic halls; when your cup of joy runs full; ascribe its fulness to the LORD, and drink it not without a prayer for caution and a vow of thankfulness to Him who fills all things living with plenteousness, and has given you an especial share of temporal felicity. But when it pleases Him, in the dispensation of his mysterious but still tender mercies, to remind you of the cross in the world—of the sepulchre in the garden—to chasten you for sin, and to inflict on you a share of that chastisement, the heavier, the incalculably heavier portion of which was borne for you by his sinless Son, remember the resignation of the Patriarch under a darker covenant: "What, shall I receive good at the hand of the LORD, and shall I not receive evil also?" When I allude to the Old Testament, as to a darker covenant, I do not mean by that expression to exclude from its sacred pages the blessed hope of immortality, which they, in truth, have indicated, but which a brighter dispensation has illumined and made clear. However great is the importance which I attach to the more lucid revealments of the Gospel, I never can believe that Job, whose fortitude was so approved, as to

Induce that sublime exclamation under grievous suffering, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," who apparently at the last extremity, expressed his unequivocal conviction, that "His Redeemer lived, and should stand at the latter day upon the earth;" I never can believe that this good and enlightened Patriarch was wholly ignorant of the Christian covenant, of the "Lamb slain" in predestination, "from the foundation of the world." But this I may surely aver, that, if Job in the obscurity of a dim and partial revelation could recognise enough of comfort to support him in unbending patience to the gates of death, the very humblest Christian that treads this path of sorrow has, in the unfolded Scriptures of completed prophecy,—in the full letters of Apostolic consolation,—in the recorded words of GOD manifest in the flesh,—in the attested miracles of CHRIST crucified for his sins, and risen to confirm the promise of his own ultimate resurrection, ample grounds for a confidence in redeeming mercy, which never can be shaken, while the spirit of counsel and of ghostly strength is his, and his sufficiency is of GOD. No, while he can address one prayer of faith to his Father which is in heaven; while he can lift one thought of his heart to the great and prevailing Intercessor, who ever maketh supplication for him at the throne of GOD, he will never be daunted by the grim destroyer who can only hide in his dark tabernacle, a corrupt but imperishable body which the conqueror shall again reveal,—when the dead in CHRIST shall rise first, and over them the second death shall not prevail.

Full of this hope of immortality let us endeavour, if we may not deserve it, at least by a co-operation with GOD's gracious Spirit to render ourselves more meet for its enjoyment. Let us tread, though at the humble

distance which only is attainable, in his most blessed steps, who wearied himself in going about to do good, and gave his precious life for that redeeming charity, for the advance of which, so far as this approved and excellent Institution is concerned, you are now invited to communicate but a small portion of your substance.

Take a single object of this Charity for your consideration. Look at that child of sorrow and bereavement, bowed down at the season in which the children of men are generally the most happy by the weight of an overwhelming calamity, and driven "to the grave" of her only earthly supporter "to weep there." Look at her return from that grave to her drear and desolate home—a home which in that dreariness and destitution is still dear to her best affections, but which she is too probably compelled to quit for ever; look at the appalling prospect of her after history; look at the frightful phantom of want and ignorance by which she is environed; think of the horrors of such an one fainting under the calamities incident to abject poverty in this world, and at her tender age imbued with little knowledge of another; benighted, the light within her fast flickering into darkness, yielding gradually to the temptation of sin after sin, and at last sinking guilty and despairing to the tomb. Then think that from a fate like this your alms, without any personal impoverishment, may, by God's gracious providence, effectually deliver her, may feed her with the bread of immortality, may guide her feet into the way of peace, and in promoting her temporal and spiritual welfare, may attract (for such is God's explicit promise) accumulated blessings on your own soul. I feel that it is unnecessary to urge another motive. You will give, brethren, under the conviction that the eye of God is upon you, that He sees and estimates alike the

Prince's munificence and the widow's mite cast into H
treasury, whence it shall be restored to you with immea
surable interest when, having passed through the grav
and gate of death, and rendered an account of you
stewardship, you shall enter into the joy of your LORD.

THE TRUTH OF GOD.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

BY THE

REV. CHARLES A. THURLOW, M.A.,

RECTOR OF MALPAS, AND CHAPLAIN TO HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF
YORK.

NUMBERS XXIII. 19.

God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?

THIS acknowledgment of a great truth was forced from a man, whose lips reluctantly uttered what his heart disliked. And a sentence, itself of permanent importance, received, if possible, additional enforcement, from the circumstances which accompanied its first announcement. It was Balaam who was obliged to make this solemn declaration respecting the infallible truth of God. That prophet had been informed with a clearness and decision which should have commanded his instant submission, what was the Divine will, and his own corresponding duty. Yet he attempted to evade a plain and positive order. And having begun a course of disobedience, he passed through the usual experience of all persons who swerve from the narrow and secure path of simple submission.

He was allowed, like others, in a measure to follow the devices of his own heart; and for a moment he might think that he had succeeded in altering the Divine purpose. He was rebuked, chastened, alarmed: yet he con-

tinued to persevere, and still seemed to hope that ultimately, by some means as yet unknown, he should be able to compass his object, and defeat the declared intention of God. After waiting for many days, as it were, in expectation that time might operate a change; after trying various expedients, which might arrest, if not turn aside, the inevitable course of events; and after the performance of certain religious services, as if to win the approbation of Him, whose determination he wished to alter; the prophet was obliged, at last, to give utterance to a truth, which was the sentence of disappointment to those who anxiously hung upon his lips; as well as the severest condemnation of his own obstinate disobedience and disbelief. Positively and conclusively Balaam said, "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?"

And this, my brethren, is the confession which, willingly or unwillingly, must come forth from the mouth of every child of man. Whatever degree of influence this undoubted truth may now exercise over us, the moment must come when this shall be the very expression of our own experience. God cannot intentionally deceive: God cannot change his mind: whatever He has indeed told us, must be the sincere expression of his will; and his will is the eternal law of the whole creation.

When, therefore, I seriously propose to you the question, "Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" you do not, you cannot seriously, doubt what answer should be given: you would at once, if individually appealed to, add your testimony in confirmation of the text; and in a certain sense your own judgment and conscience might

spontaneously adopt the expression of the Psalmist, "For ever, Oh LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven."

You do not expect, you dare not deliberately wish; that God should falsify his own truth, and so bring inconceivable misery and confusion upon all his creatures, who would thus be cast off as the victims of chance and doubt and fear for ever. We none of us desire such tremendous evil: but, alas! we are so accustomed to deceit and change; so often does man lie; so often does the son of man repent, that by experience we almost know nothing of fixed purpose and unchanging veracity. We pass our days in the midst of uncertainty, falsehood, and fraud: and it is to be feared, that familiarity with these things has prevented a just estimation of their character. We have become so accustomed to such a state of things, that by force of habit, as it were imperceptibly, we have been gradually preparing to expect the same every where, even in the government of God.

And it requires a collected and chastened exercise of the judgment, before we can receive a truth so rigid and severe. And when the reason is convinced, the heart still remains to be subdued. That every word will be remembered and fulfilled to the very letter; what an idea of unbending strictness! Is it possible? Can we firmly and cheerfully answer, "Yes, thus it must be, thus it ought to be, thus it shall be?"

Let us try and examine this serious subject a little more closely.

You all acknowledge the Bible to be a sacred book; and you have been accustomed to look upon it with respect and reverence. You see it opened during Divine Service: and certain portions of it are devoutly read. It is again referred to in the sermon, as the supreme authority. Have you then distinctly considered that thus

the Almighty and Alwise God speaks to mankind? In this manner you hear what the LORD of all has determined: here He has recorded for ever the decisions of his infinite mind.

“All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.” And, “God who in sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things.” While, therefore, every word of God demands an instant attention and submission,—the truths which once passed from the lips of the Son himself,—the revelations of that glorious Person, who is The supreme disposer of all things, seem in a pre-eminent degree to command a cheerful acquiescence and implicit unreserved confidence. May “the Spirit of Truth teach us!” God speaks in CHRIST, and CHRIST with the utmost solemnity. May the “HOLY GHOST take of these things of CHRIST and shew them unto us!”

Thus saith the Lord, “Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*.” “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven†.” Thus is recorded the great final law which shall regulate the admission of every child of man into the kingdom of the redeemed. There exist not in language terms more decisive or comprehensive, than those which have here been chosen. To begin life anew, to be turned round and obliged to take another opposite path,—these are the images presented, in order to express the extensive moral change which

* John iii. 3.

† Matt. xviii. 3.

constitutes personal salvation. We stay not to engage in embarrassing inquiry as to the time or manner of this vital alteration. It is the essential truth—the fact itself, not the adjuncts or the circumstances, which now demand our attention. He whose knowledge penetrates the secrets of creation, has affirmed, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the spirit is spirit.” He whose will is the statute of the universe, has determined “ye must be born again.” And He, whose voice first made the announcement, will ultimately be proved to have sole authority to receive, and sole authority to exclude, as the Lord supreme of the kingdom of heaven: “The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son.”

What truths are these to be heard in such a world as ours! How difficult to be received! how likely to be evaded or obscured!

Do we, then, believe that dispositions and pursuits, different from those which belong to our fallen nature, are indispensably necessary to our holiness and happiness? And is this progressive improvement the subject of our conscious experience? And are there scriptural reasons for hoping that the Holy Spirit of CHRIST has begun to efface from our character the features of the first Adam, and to fashion our hearts and habits according to the divine original of the second Adam, the first-born of the redeemed family?

If so—then have we known and realized those other solemn words which the Son has also spoken: “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him*.” “The Father loveth the Son,

* Matt. xi. 27.

and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him*.”

How unqualified, how absolute in this assertion! The well-being of every child of man is made to depend simply on individual relationship to CHRIST. Alone, we are each of us degraded in creation. We cannot recover our position, until our weakness and our guilt are associated with the power and righteousness of another, who is constituted the sole Redeemer. Before this union is effected, the busy or joyous days we pass are comparatively worthless,—the divine displeasure hangs heavily upon them. This, therefore, “is the work of GOD, that we believe in Him whom He hath sent.” And when thus we have “come to CHRIST,” and “received CHRIST,” a supernatural energy is imparted. “The life which we now live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God.” “We are filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by JESUS CHRIST unto the glory and praise of God.” “We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation: we gird up the loins of our mind, are sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of JESUS CHRIST.”

Are these the truths we know and feel? Is this the fellowship which above all blessings we desire? The life of faith—is this our actual experience? The hope of immortality—is this our present strength?

If, indeed, we have thus “learned CHRIST,” then are we prepared to listen to his voice again, while thus He speaks:—“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his

* John iii. 35, 36.

righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you*.” “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it†.” “Enter ye in at the straight gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it‡.”

Do we, then, sincerely acquiesce in the propriety of this positive demand? Do we heartily allow that religion ought to be the first object, to which all other pursuits must be reduced in subjection? And particularly, do we acknowledge, that for the attainment of the hidden treasure, we must be prepared to make a constant sacrifice? And having gone forth in the spirit of self-denial, have we so proved the patience and the struggle of the Christian life, that, like other disciples, we have been ready to exclaim—“Who, then, can be saved?”

At such a moment and in such a state of mind, we may the rather listen once more to the gracious words of security and comfort which the Good Shepherd addresses to the sheep which are folded beneath his care:—“The things that are impossible with man are possible with God§.” “Fear not, little flock; it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom||.” “Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.” “If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more

* Matt. vi. 33.

† Luke ix. 23, 24.

‡ Matt. vii. 13, 14.

§ Luke xviii. 27.

|| Luke xii. 32.

shall your heavenly Father give the HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask Him*.” “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one†.”

Happy, indeed, if we have thus been called, and thus have followed CHRIST! Happy, indeed, if we have thus been led to the “green pastures and still waters” of refreshment and of peace. Then, passing onward “in the fear of God and in the comfort of HOLY GHOST,” we may draw near and listen with solemn reverence to these final words:—“Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. For, as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself: and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation‡.”

These truths have successively been chosen from all the other revelations of the inspired volume, that attention being drawn to a few objects, we might the rather be able to estimate their real importance. It is impossible that interests more momentous can engage the mind of a reasonable being, or awaken the sympathies of an immortal spirit. And these words have once been uttered by the Son of God: under direction and with

* Luke xi. 9, 13.

† John x. 27—30.

‡ John v. 25—29.

authority they have been recorded; and now are they enrolled as the decisions of that glorious Person, whose power will certainly accomplish what his wisdom has decreed. Their complete fulfilment in regard to us individually may seem to be yet future, therefore less easily discerned, and accordingly less influential. It may, however, be of service to reflect, that some of the most improbable, and apparently the most difficult events, while still discerned only in the dim obscurity of the distance, —were predicted, described, and registered in the Book, —and after this no power could possibly reverse the immutable decree.

Whosoever has pondered some of the minuter incidents, as well as the grander occurrences, so accurately defined beforehand in the writings of Moses and the Prophets, whether in relation to Israel or the other nations or individuals of mankind; and then has considered their subsequent literal accomplishment; cannot have failed to receive a deep impression, an intense conviction of the absolute certainty of the word. And every mind capable of due reflection may derive the strongest confirmation from the very events which at this moment are advancing on their way: proceeding, as they do, according to the very course long since described, and filling up the details of that grand outline, drawn by unerring discretion, full many a century ago.

Indeed, the certainty of the Divine word is proclaimed by the very ordinances of creation. It is more than four thousand years since the sovereign voice declared, "Seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease*." During all this long period, neither the struggles of

* Gen. viii. 22.

conflicting elements, nor, what is more, the moral violence of man, have been able to disturb this fixed irreversible decree. And whensoever the laws which regulate the physical condition of this world have been at all affected or for a moment disturbed, it has always been as in deference to the higher authority of a ruling power; it has been to confer the more distinguished honour upon the revealed word of God.

“It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail*.” Yea, verily, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words, saith the LORD, shall not pass away†.”

And now, dear brethren, consider, I beseech you, the solemn responsibility which rests upon the ministers of the New Testament. “The word of the LORD endureth for ever: and this is the word, which by the Gospel is preached unto you‡.” To select, to expound, and to apply that truth which by the Spirit is invested with almighty power: this is our awful duty. “Who is sufficient for these things?”

Pray then for us, that we may never incur the dreadful guilt of “handling the Word of GOD deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth may commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of GOD§.” Pray for us, that we may “meditate upon these things, may give ourselves wholly to them, that our profiting may appear to all; and that taking heed to ourselves and to the doctrine, we may continue in them; and in doing this save both ourselves and them that hear us||.”

And for yourselves, brethren, “take heed how ye

* Luke xvi. 17.

† Matt. xxiv. 35.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 25.

§ 2 Cor. iv. 2.

|| 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16.

hear." The LORD has said, "My word shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in that whereto I sent it*." How often have you presumed to listen to the truth! How often have you dared to trifle with the word! And is there not reason to fear, lest that oft-repeated prophecy may now be fulfilling upon you, which saith, "By hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive†." May the guilt of neglected opportunities be removed; and may the insult offered to the best gift of God be forgiven, through the mediation of the Righteous Advocate at the Throne of Grace! In the sorrows of a contrite heart may you anticipate the awful revelations of the Judgment-day: and proving in your own experience the Divine mercy promised to the penitent, may you thus be permitted to add your own heartfelt evidence to the unfailing certainty of the Word of Truth!

But "we are bound to give thanks always for you, brethren beloved of the LORD, because GOD hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto He called you by the Gospel‡:" and because "the word which ye heard ye received not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe§." You have the witness in yourself. The blessing you possess cannot be concealed: the voice which has spoken to your heart must be heard abroad. To you, therefore, it is granted, also, to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." And while delivering your appointed testimony to the

* Isaiah lv. 11.

† 2 Thess. ii. 13.

‡ Matt. xiii. 14.

§ 1 Thess. ii. 13.

truth of Him in whom you have believed, by the special works of piety and charity, you hopefully await the day when "whosoever shall have confessed CHRIST before men, shall be confessed by CHRIST before his Father which is in heaven."

LONGING FOR DEATH.

BY THE

REV. F. C. MASSINGBERD, M.A.,

RECTOR OF SOUTH ORMSBY.

PHILIPPIANS I. 21.

To live is Christ, and to die is gain.

WE may find many places in the Bible, both in the Old and New Testament, where people *long for death*. But they do this—they have this longing—from as many different causes, and in as many different ways, as people do now in this present time. I think it will be useful to bring together some of these places of Scripture, that we may see both what sort of a longing for death it is which is wrong, and what that sort it is that is right; for certainly it does not follow that every man is fit to die—fit to die? alas, who *can* be fit? But it does not follow that every one is *prepared* to die, who wishes to do so. Nor, even for those who are so, is it right to give way to this longing, except in submission to the will of God.

Now, in speaking of the examples in the Bible of people's longing for death, one need hardly mention such a wicked desire as that of Saul, rebellious, reprobate, wicked Saul, who, when God had mastered him, and all his rebellious schemes had turned against him, could not, or would not endure his life, and so fell upon his own sword and died. No one can doubt but that a suicide, a man who kills himself, is guilty of high and presumptuous wickedness and rebellion against God; throwing

back the soul God gave him, and rushing unbidden and uncalled into the presence of his Judge.

But to come to more doubtful cases. There are many good sort of people, and some very pious people, who are tempted at some time of their lives, by the load of grief, and weariness of the world, to beg and pray for death, who yet do it inconsiderately, and neither with a right motive, nor with submission to God's will. When Rebecca said to Jacob, "I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth," such an exclamation was one of those thoughtless sayings which people get a trick of uttering without almost considering what they mean. Yet this is wrong: and people would not talk so if they considered rightly. "The mouth of fools poureth out foolishness," and that is the *best* that can be said for them; for if they *do* mean that they are weary of life because of some cross that God has given them to bear, they are guilty of rebellious wickedness—they are striving against God's Providence instead of bowing to his disposal of them.

But now take the case of Jonah—a prophet of God sent to denounce God's judgments against the city of Nineveh—who, because God's mercy rejoiced against his judgment, so that He spared the city on its repentance; had the presumption to charge God with having dishonoured him, and to pray therefore that he might die. "Now therefore take, Oh Lord, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live*." One can hardly conceive such foolish pride. This prophet was so proud of *his* gift, so jealous of *his* fame, of his reputation for prophecy, that when God in mercy spared the lives of all the inhabitants of a city as large, or perhaps larger,

* Jonah iv. 3.

than London now, he would rather have died than suffer what he thought the disgrace to himself of not having his prophecy fulfilled, though so many thousands of his fellow-creatures must have lost their lives. How careful should this make us, not to be proud of our little gifts and graces; how fully does it shew us that pride proves that our graces are but small; for if Jonah had had more grace, he would have rejoiced at God's mercy, instead of longing to die, because his word did not come true. But now I fear we can find, if we look about us, many a Jonah among ourselves, many a man who, though he might not dare to kill himself, yet would *rather* die than endure the least disgrace. Nay, this is a thing that the world boasts of. No matter whether the disgrace be deserved or no, it is looked upon as a thing to be proud of for a man to desire to die rather than his good name should be tainted. Not but that a good name is a good thing, a thing to be valued, a thing to be thankful for; but it is no proof of a religious mind, no proof of a mind subdued and chastened by the Spirit of God, when we cannot bear the loss even of that of which we are most justly fond. And they who do so may be called honourable or honest or high-minded men, by the world; but as *religious* men, they must stand by the side of Jonah, the most disobedient and, next to Balaam, the least truly religious, of all the prophets.

Job, again, was *weary* of his life; and though he did not pray for present death, he wished he had not been born, or had died immediately: "Oh, that I had given up the ghost and no eye had seen me*!" But this was hardly right. It seems like the exclamation of a darkened mind; and some have thought that even the mind

* Job x. 18.

of Job was dark at first. He had served God, as far as he knew, with all his heart; yet, when he spoke in this way, it seems as if he had not yet come to see the dealings of God's providence, and had not faith enough to believe that his affliction would work out for him far more abundant glory. How many of us, in our darker moods, have wished the same? How many have thought how happy we should have been to die from the womb, and miss the cares and sorrows, the labour and toil, the woe and grief that has fallen to our lot? Yet it is not so. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." "We are made perfect through suffering." "The trial of our faith worketh patience." All which means, that our characters are made better by trials, and so that our reward will be greater, because we shall be able to enjoy more. The infant may pass unblamed to paradise, bathed in its Saviour's blood,—God forbid we should deem otherwise!—but still it will have but an infant's joys, because it *cannot* have more. And to enjoy the full blessedness of heaven, we must have known what sin is, and what the world is, because then only can we compare that blessedness with the awful depth of misery, the ruin, the danger, from which we have been rescued.

But greater and holier men still have prayed for death, and chief of these, Moses and Elijah. Moses, who had to bear the backslidings of the children of Israel till his heart was broken by their stubborn ingratitude; who lost his own share in the enjoyment of the promised land, for having once been moved to sin by their rebellion; who had given up all for their sake; and even when God would have made of him a great nation instead of them, who prayed God rather to forgive them; Moses was once moved to pray for death. "If Thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray Thee, out of

hand, if I have found favour in thy sight*.” We are not told that GOD was angry with Moses for this, and we can hardly compare his state with our own; and yet there is a comparison which we may and ought to make. We may compare the prayer of Moses for death, and that of Elijah too, with what St. Paul says about the same thing. For that will show us how differently a Christian may and ought to feel about it, from the wisest and best and holiest without the gospel. The prayer of Elijah is very like that of Moses, and it sprang from the same cause—grief for GOD’s people. It was after he had slain the prophets of Baal, when he doubtless hoped that the LORD would restore his own worship with a high hand; but Jezebel was allowed to prevail, and he fled once more, alone and persecuted, from the face of the idolatrous queen. “And he came and sat down under a juniper tree, and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers†.”

Moses and Elias were among the best and most true servants of GOD under the old dispensation; and they both, as we see, prayed for death, when they were weary of this life. Their weariness of life arose indeed from nothing else than their holy zeal for GOD, and their pious grief at seeing wickedness triumphant; but still, it may be well to compare this prayer of theirs with what St. Paul, enlightened by the Gospel, thought and said upon the same subject. It is where St. Paul writes to the Philippians about his state of uncertainty, whether he should then be put to death by the Romans or not. And did he desire or long for death? It seems that for his own sake he did. But did he therefore pray for it? Quite the contrary. “To me,” he says in the

* Numbers xi. 15.

† 1 Kings xix. 4.

text, "to live is CHRIST, and to die is gain." If I live, I have so much longer to serve CHRIST; if I die, I shall be so much the sooner rewarded. "I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with CHRIST, which is far better; nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." And in the next chapter again, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." Now the state of mind which appears in this language is that of a man who did indeed long earnestly for the joys of heaven; who knew that it was far better to depart and be with CHRIST, to whom to die was gain, and yet who was so resigned to the LORD's will, in whom every thought was so brought in subjection to the obedience of CHRIST, that he was content to remain for their sakes to whom he was sent to preach. Nay, and we learn yet another thing. Much as he longed for heaven, he does not seem to have made sure of it. "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in CHRIST JESUS*." And this should surely make us very cautious about buoying up ourselves or others with assurances, as if we had some inward feelings given us by which we could know that we are pardoned or accepted. The Christian's assurance can be grounded only on that on which St. Paul's was grounded, when he says in another place, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." And I shall now point out this place also as bearing upon this same subject; it is in 2 Tim. iv. 6. This epistle was written, not like that to the Philippians, when he was *uncertain* about his death, but when he knew from God

* Philippians iii. 13.

that he was about to suffer, about to receive the martyr's crown by a painful and cruel death, and *then* his language is of a different kind. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory, which the LORD the righteous Judge shall give me in that day." I said the *reason* he knew this was not by any inward feelings, but because his conscience told him that he had fought a good fight, and had kept the faith, which was the duty appointed to him; and so, when he knew he was to die, he knew that he had persevered to the end, and expected his Redeemer's promise,—“He that endureth to the end shall be saved*.” At that time, therefore, he was able to exult, and to anticipate with eager joy the crown of glory which had been the hope of his life, and the star by which he had steered his course.

What I collect, then, from St. Paul's feelings about death, as distinguished from the feelings of those who did not know the Gospel, are these two things: 1st, That they desired death from weariness of life, while he desired it from the longing hope he had of everlasting joy; and 2dly, that while they presumed to pray for themselves that they might die, he was always content to wait the LORD's time; and that for two reasons, both because he never felt sure till the end came that his crown was won, and also because he submitted himself in all things to the will of God.

And this seems to be the crowning glory of the Gospel, the different views it gives of us about death from those vouchsafed to the holiest saints before. Thus truly hath CHRIST brought life and immortality to light;

* St. Matthew x. 22.

thus truly is his word fulfilled, that he that is least in the kingdom of GOD is greater than the greatest prophet. The lowest, poorest, meanest member of the Church of CHRIST, if he be a true member of it, is greater in privilege, greater in glory, yea, greater even in spiritual knowledge than the greatest saint of old. Not a better man,—he says not so,—but partaker of a greater privilege; just as a nobleman is greater than the richest man without a title, so the Christian is greater than the greatest prophet.

But then, if this be so, let us see how this subject applies to us. The Christian frame of mind, we see, is that of a man who, while he longs for the enjoyment of GOD in CHRIST, is content to await the LORD's time, and to endure whatever afflictions the LORD may lay upon him.

Is it so indeed? Then what are we to think of those who have never longed for heaven? who have no thought about the matter, or who look upon death with dread, and drive away the thoughts of it that they may return to the thoughts of this world? As to the mere dread of death, as such, some people feel differently from others, from mere natural temper. One man has no fears, another fears every thing; and, as far as that is concerned, little is to be thought of it, because death in that sense is little else than some great bodily pain, which some people dread and others do not. But I am speaking of that which comes after death, of heaven and hell; of the presence of GOD, and CHRIST, and saints, and angels; of the happiness of that society, the blessedness of those joys. Have you never yet known what it is to long for this? Then let me set before you some of the causes which may have prevented you from doing so.

The first cause is sin. The sinner has no longing

for heaven: he has no pleasure in such things as are to be enjoyed there. His joy, if joy it be, is such only as he could share with devils, who will not share it, but mock him in his woe. But has he no thought about death? Oh, yes, death to him is full of terror. It may be he hardly ever thinks about it: but he is none the better off for that. The world and its pleasures and pursuits may drown the thought for awhile: but it will come; and it will come like a strong man armed, as it is justly called, the King of Terrors. "Oh, death, how terrible art thou to the man that is at ease in his possessions."

Others, again, are always thinking about death, and thinking about it with alarm and anxiety. They cannot satisfy their minds about it. Now this is better than the other; but it is not a right state of mind. I do not say we should reprove ourselves overmuch, because it is so with us. Rather we should hope the time will come when we shall have a happier view of the matter. Only let us beware in the meanwhile, lest we should be building upon a wrong foundation. Perhaps there may be too much of self-righteousness in our minds; perhaps we may be trusting to ourselves instead of trusting in Christ alone; or we may be exacting of ourselves a hard service, as a task, whereas our obedience ought to spring from love, and be the fruit of faith; or we may be unable as yet to overcome some besetting sin, and while it remains we cannot think of death with peace. If so, only so much the greater need is there that we persevere in watchfulness and prayer.

Again, there are those who long for death, as Moses, Elias, Job, and others did, as the release from pain and suffering; not as the entrance into everlasting joy. Probably there will be found a great many who do so; and

who perhaps take comfort from it, and flatter themselves it is a proof that they are fit to die. I have shewn, I think, that it is no such thing; both because the calmness with which some think of death arises merely from bodily temperament, and because it is wrong, positively wrong, in a Christian, to ask for death, so long as God chooses he should live, and much more wrong when the wish arises only from weariness of the world. What if suffering, and poverty, and pain, and grief surround you? CHRIST was made perfect through suffering; and shall you claim to go to heaven without it? Nay, this very suffering is your trial; and you ought, instead of repining, to be *thankful* for trials. It seems, perhaps, a hard thing to say, but you ought, indeed; and if you are a good Christian, you will be thankful that you are thus made like unto CHRIST, and prepared, by whatever present sorrow, for the enjoyment of his presence.

Lastly, there is the case of the good Christian, who, like St. Paul, longs to go, and yet is content to stay. Oh, what a happy state of mind is this, my brethren; and shall we think we cannot attain it? Not so: many and many are those, in every age of the Church, with whom it has been, blessed be God, yea, and with whom it *is* so. They long, with St. Paul, to depart and be with CHRIST, which they know to be far better. And yet they are content to abide the LORD's time; and that for these two reasons. First, because they do not count themselves to have already attained; they never make sure of the victory till it is won; and, also, because every thought of their hearts is brought into subjection to the will of God. His will, therefore, is their choice; and, in them, their Saviour's prayer is accomplished, for they do His will on earth, as it is done in heaven.

MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

BY THE

REV. CYRIL G. HUTCHINSON, M.A.,

LATE STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD; RECTOR OF BATSFORD.

ST. JAMES i. 17.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

TO understand the exact meaning of these words, we must refer to a few verses preceding them; and, again, to understand those verses, we must make inquiries respecting certain opinions which prevailed amongst a sect of the Jews in regard to the nature and moral condition of man.

The last point, therefore, must be the first of our inquiry.

There seems to have been a notion amongst the Pharisees that all the actions of men proceeded from a sort of constraining fate or necessity; that this fate, however, arose, not from a mere chain of circumstances necessarily existing and holding together, and originally independent of all superior power and will, as the heathen thought, but from a constitution of nature, at first designed and impressed on them by the hand of the Almighty, and working together afterwards, not through his continued providence, but by its own qualities, relative affections, and dependencies.

Thus they held that certain men were born with certain propensities, which were under the influence of the stars and planets whose light and power more especially prevailed at the time of their birth. Just as at the present day, it is not uncommon to say of persons in their advance or decline of worldly circumstances, that their star is in the ascendant or decline; an expression which, though now merely figurative, is possibly derived from these notions.

But they did not stop here. If men's constitution depended on these luminaries, then their moral responsibility was in a great measure affected by this dependence; because they were not altogether their own masters, being worked upon and impelled by an external force, which they had no power of repelling perhaps, if, indeed, in any way of resisting.

Such being the case, the evil that man did was excused by them; and not only so, but charged indirectly on Almighty God his Creator. For as they admitted that all things were created by Him, so, if one part of his creation influenced *of necessity* another part, that influence must be ascribed to his work. Men, therefore, unavoidably ran, by this mode of reasoning, into opinions highly derogatory to the honour and goodness of God.

Now, St. James, in the Epistle before us, at least the former part of it, controverts this erroneous notion of the Pharisees in particular, and perhaps Jews in general. His Epistle, as you will observe, is addressed, according to the first verse in the chapter, as follows: "James, a servant of GOD, and of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, to the Twelve Tribes which are scattered abroad"—to the Christian Jews, that is, of the dispersion. And then, after encouraging them to sustain with constancy and resignation whatever trials might fall on them in this

life, he follows up his exhortation with this doctrine; "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man;"—that is, nothing but what is itself evil can tempt man to evil; and God, therefore, who is a good Being, cannot have any temptation to tempt his creatures to evil. But, he continues, "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his *own* lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every *good* gift and every *perfect* gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning."

St. James, then, ascribes the evil that men do, neither to overruling fate, nor to the influence of the stars, nor to Almighty God their Creator, but to men's own corrupt inclinations, by which they suffer themselves to be enticed. These, he tells us, so soon as the human will consents to them, lead to wicked purposes and determinations; and so soon as these purposes and determinations are carried into effect, or attempted to be so carried, produce actual sin; which actual sin, so soon as it is accomplished, subjects them to the penalty originally denounced against sin—the forfeiture of eternal life, and the seeds of death, even in this. "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath *conceived*, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is *finished*, bringeth forth death."—Such is the doctrine of Scripture in respect of sin. It is not attributable to necessity, to external influence, still less to a beneficent Creator; but to man himself, who chooses to indulge the corrupt propensities of himself, gives his willing consent to their gratification, instead of

laying to heart the dictates of God's Holy Word, and the inspiration of his Spirit, both of which he willingly transgresses for that purpose.

Yet, says St. James, though evil be not attributable to God,—for “God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man,”—all that is good is attributable to Him; “Every good and perfect gift cometh from above:” nothing that is in itself intrinsically good and perfect is earth-born. That, on the other hand, does come from above; for the fountain of all goodness is there, and there alone in perfection; and there sin is not known. And yet, attribute not even this good, says St. James, to sun or moon, or stars or planets, but to a source infinitely beyond them, even to that Creator who fixed those luminaries in their firmament—to Him who made them, whose habitation is far above them, even in the Heaven of Heavens; whose power, therefore, is almighty, whose influence on mankind is uniform, whose Spirit operates on their minds, whose providence guides them with equal and consistent favour; not varying and changing and shifting in his grace and help, not withdrawing power because limited in the exercise thereof,—as you imagine these stars to do and be, by their relative distances and position over the earth,—but ever present with mankind, ever willing to do them good, ever ready to aid and urge them on towards perfection by that which is in itself good and perfect, even the continued energy of his preventing and assisting Spirit. “Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the *Father of lights*,” the Creator of these luminaries, “with whom is no *variableness*, neither *shadow of turning*.”

The error of the Pharisees is not that which at the present day misleads the mind of the Christian world. Men do not ascribe now their doings to the influence of

the sun and moon, still less to the power of any particular star which might have been visible at the time of their birth. They know very well that whatever influence these may exercise over clime and temperature, yet their main purpose, so far as we are concerned, is to give light and benefit to us, to mark out the times and seasons, and not to affect our moral nature, not to lead us into the path of duty, still less to mislead us into that of vice and wickedness. "GOD said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years. And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so."

It is not uncommon, however, for men even now to fall into error respecting their moral powers, and consequently their moral responsibility. They argue, that the nature of man is corrupt. Being so, it is not disposed to piety and virtue; but, on the contrary, inclined to evil. That so great is the inclination and propensity thereto, that man cannot always stand upright, if he would. That when he falls into sin, therefore, he only follows the dictates of his own nature, for which he is not responsible; the corruption of his nature arising from no choice of his own, but from his constitution. Hence they remove all the blame from themselves to their Creator, who suffered them to come into the world with that corruption which, they say, they are unable to withstand.

Now this is but Pharisaism in modern shape. For if men do evil only because they cannot help it, and yield to irresistible power, what matters it from whence that power proceeds, whether from the lights above us, or from the corruption within us? In either case, man will be fated

to act as the power influences him, and cease, consequently, to be a responsible being.

The fact, however, is, that, so far as regards the corruption of human nature, there is a foundation in truth of the doctrine here laid down; but the superstructure is overloaded. There is a tendency to evil; but that tendency is not such as to constrain a man by force to follow it, whether he will or not. It never has been such. And since the mission of the Holy Spirit cannot be such; for that Spirit was promised to aid us against that tendency.

We have seen that, in the verses preceding my text, St. James ascribes the sin of man entirely to his own choice, and not to force, even from his own nature, which, however, he admits to be corrupt. He lays down the fact of his corruption in these words: "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his *own* lust, and enticed." Here is the moving power of sin—the corruption of his own nature; not actual sin itself, but, as I said, the moving power of sin, that of which sin avails itself to effect the sinful deed. Thus he continues, when lust hath *conceived*, when this conception hath actually entertained the project of its desires, it bringeth forth sin. And when that project is really carried into effect, the guilt is completed, and the penalty entailed; for "sin," he says, "when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Sin, therefore, from first to last is attributable to man, and its guilt to his will and choice; and consequently, he is responsible, and amenable to the punishment of death.

Take a strong illustration of this, the strongest perhaps that we can find. Our first parents were created in innocency; they were "free to fall," if they chose it; but *they* had no natural bias to sin. Their nature was *not*

corrupt, till they themselves corrupted it. They issued out of the hands of their Creator, as all GOD's works must do, and as every thing in nature did, for so Moses tells us, perfect in their kind. "GOD said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: so GOD created man in his own image, in the image of GOD created He him: male and female created He them." "And GOD," we are told at the conclusion of the whole, "saw every thing that He had made, and behold it was very good." There was then, at that time, no natural propensity to evil in man; for the Epistle tells us that "GOD cannot be tempted with evil," in whose image man was created. Still man fell. He was tempted by the evil Spirit. The evil Spirit applied himself to the "lust" of man; his lust being as yet not in itself sinful. But it conceived, and brought forth sin. "The woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise;" and she cherished these thoughts, instead of the interdiction which GOD had placed between them and that tree. Here, then, she was not only "drawn away of her own lust, and enticed," but that lust became sinful. It was drawn away by the enticement: "It conceived and brought forth sin." "She took of the fruit and did eat;" and so the sin was finished in its guilt and responsibility, and it brought forth death.

The same argument applies to the case of Adam. The tempter in his case was not the evil Spirit, but his corrupted wife. "She gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." And ever since that day, man, born after their corruption, and in their image, has not only fled, as they did, from "the voice of the LORD GOD walking," but that of the LORD GOD speaking to them his revealed Word, and, as far as they are able, "hid

themselves" from his holy Presence, moving in the secret recesses of their consciences.

There is, then, now a propensity to evil in man. He is tempted and drawn away of his own *sinful* lust, and enticed. But still that lust need not conceive and bring forth actual sin, unless he yield himself to the temptation, which he certainly has the option of doing or not. And, therefore, to endeavour to remove the guilt of his misdoings from himself to the necessity of his nature, is manifestly unjust, and a procedure which tends to destroy all distinction between right and wrong, and fill the world with wickedness and lawlessness.

And this is so much the more true as the Almighty, notwithstanding human nature has corrupted itself, has provided a remedy against this corruption. In the garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve through their wilful disobedience had in fact pronounced their own banishment from the tree of life to that cold dreary outer world, unadapted to its growth, GOD had still compassion on his outcasts. He clothed their persons to protect them against the rigours of a climate to which they were not inured, and against which their own unaided constitutions were not proof. So, in like manner, when his beloved Son had made an atonement for their sin, and for the hereditary sinfulness and actual sins of men since born, He provided the means of strength and renewal for their souls still assaulted by the ancient enemy in the promise of his Holy Spirit. Many a gift had He given to the sons of men. He gave them first an existence in the likeness of his own nature. He gave them a country laid out and planted as a garden by his own hand. He gave them all the fruits thereof save one. He gave them dominion over every other creature, within it and without it. When

they sinned He respite their punishment to a future day, a boon totally undeserved. He banished them, however, from their original habitation, into which they had been from the first transplanted, to that country from which they took their birth. But there He still protected them in their bodies, and cheered them in their spirits, promising a future restoration. Of that promise He continually reminded them in all their sorrows and their sufferings. At last, He fulfilled it by instituting a means of redemption, of which they might avail themselves. Then, as sin still attached to their nature, though its penalty was paid, He showed them a fountain by which their strength might be refreshed and renovated in the mission of the Holy Spirit. This was his last gift, his good and perfect gift, "without which nothing is strong, nothing is holy." And it was precisely the gift needed, after the reparation of man's sin, that he might not sin again to that extent which should forfeit the benefit of the reparation. It was that gift which was to bring back the image of God in which his forefather had been created; and, with that restoration, the better country of which Paradise was but a faint shadow and resemblance. How much therefore has God done for mankind from first to last! We have then now the means of withstanding this corruption of our nature. We have the grace of God's Spirit, the "Comforter," to go before us in all our thoughts, and to further us in all our doings; to influence the mind and will of every one of us when he is tempted and "drawn away of his own lust, his own natural desires, and enticed," in order that they "conceive not and bring forth sin," lest that "sin, when it is finished, bring forth death" again. To charge then the guilt of our sins upon our original corruption, *so as to shift off the responsibility* from our-

selves, is an unworthy attempt to set aside the memory of that best and "perfect gift" which is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, who has, notwithstanding our multiplied offences, never altogether withdrawn Himself from us, but shewn an unchanging desire to aid us under every circumstance. "With Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

As a practical improvement, then, of what has been said, let us bear in mind the following conclusions,—

That we are all, as our catechism tells us, "born in sin, and the children of wrath;" and, as our Bible tells us, "if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Unless we are sensible of this fact we shall never understand ourselves, nor the need of a Saviour and Redeemer. Neither shall we endeavour to amend our lives as we ought to do; for he who sees no fault in himself is not likely to correct it.

Oh! who can reflect on the passages of his life and not see how prone his nature is to run into what is manifestly wrong? To what can he attribute his manifold failings, and his violent excesses, but to the natural tendencies of his soul? tendencies which he has not watched, but which at one time have damped every suggestion towards good, and, at another, prompted to the reckless commission of evil, in order to gratify some passion by which he is at the time actuated. How shall a man who is not sensible of these impulses of his nature ever put limits to their overflow? The sea rises by the external force of attraction to its corresponding height, and overwhelms all within its reach: and so will the course of that man be who yields himself as passively to the internal passions which assail him, and the storms which drive him under their direction.

The next improvement to be deduced is this, that as

we are sensible of our corruptions so we confess them; and confess them without palliating their guilt. There is something so opposed to every man's sense of rectitude in the denial of a fault, of which we are conscious, that nothing lowers us more in their esteem than this. And, on the contrary, something which gives the idea of a disposition, however weak, yet, at the bottom, ingenuous and noble in the penitential admission of having done wrong, when we have done it, that they are always disposed to make allowances and yield themselves in our favour when we make it. And so it is in respect to man and his Maker. Without the confession of our sins it is in vain to hope for the pardon of them; and with it we are taught that "GOD is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

And whilst we feel and confess our unworthiness in his sight, let it be our endeavour to lessen it for the future. This is the third improvement which I would press on your consideration. Let us strive to keep God's commandments to the best of our ability; to repress the tendencies of our corrupt nature; to walk before Him in purity and piety, and before man in kindness and brotherly love; not indulging in rash censures, not breaking forth into violent language, not rushing into hasty and intemperate conduct, not behaving with sullen malignity, not making all those with whom we have to do, whether our friends without, or families at home, uneasy and uncomfortable, and becoming a perfect plague amongst them, but, on the contrary, shewing meekness and forbearance, kindness and cheerfulness, endeavouring to win their affections by good offices.

And in order that we may have invariably this good conscience towards GOD and towards man let us remem-

ber how necessary it is that we seek for that aid which has been promised us in the influence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God "alone can order the wills and affections of sinful man." Be it our daily prayer, therefore, that He grant that we henceforth "love the thing which He commandeth, and desire that which He doth promise, through JESUS CHRIST our Lord."

ON THE NATURAL AND THE DIVINE WISDOM.

BY

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ST. JAMES, III. 15.

This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

THE word wisdom is one, it may be presumed, which is agreeable to us all; and, whatever ideas we may attach to it, we think of it as describing something that is noble and elevated. If we are told that a man is a wise man, we shall stand before him as one who is entitled to a peculiar pre-eminence; as one who is invested with a sort of exclusive grandeur; as one who has an undoubted claim to be listened to with deference. And here, at the very threshold, we might expatiate as diffusely and loftily as we pleased, on the praise of wisdom; advancing much that is in itself true, and that might be heard with great delight.

But it is your profit, brethren, rather than your pleasure, which we wish to consult; and we must, therefore, call you at once to the exercise of close thought and exact discrimination; for all is not worthy of the name of wisdom which may be so called, or so accounted. Not to perplex you with various distinctions, we are satisfied with observing, that the text virtually speaks of two sorts of wisdom; of one that is "from above," and of another which is of earthly origin. And we wish you to bear carefully in mind, that we are about to speak of two sorts of wisdom: of one that is divine, powerful, humble, and most beneficial; and of another, that is

human, feeble, proud, and unprofitable. The more we reflect on these, we shall the more clearly see that they are in all respects quite different things; different in their origin, in their operations, in their fruits, and in their results. Noble, therefore, as wisdom is, and eminent as the wise man is, we must carefully examine each before we can positively assert that the one is truly noble, or that the other is truly great; for we must not suffer ourselves to be blinded, or to be hurried along to our decision, by a specious word or a positive assertion.

Merely looking upon our text as suggesting to us two ideas with regard to wisdom, (and, therefore, not formally discussing it in connexion with its context,) we have a subject of no ordinary moment, which we wish to put before you as fully and clearly as we can in a discourse of this sort. We are to view the divine wisdom and the earthly or natural wisdom, as contrasted with each other; and thus we shall be led to reflect, on the one hand, on the good work of religion in the heart of the true believer, and, on the other hand, on the spiritual condition and life of the natural man. The subject is one, indeed, of almost boundless extent; but the few remarks which we advance will so far unfold it, we trust, as to enable you to supply our deficiency by your own meditation. May you, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, understand what you hear, receive it, remember it, and profit permanently by it!

We must, however, here premise, that when we speak of divine wisdom, or wisdom from above, we mean CHRIST Himself,—who is the wisdom of GOD, and the Gospel of CHRIST,—in which He is revealed to us, and in which the doctrines and laws which He taught are contained; and we look upon these, not as remote

objects, or as matters of speculation, but with an immediate reference to the efficacy which they put forth on the heart, when they are rightly apprehended. And farther, when we speak of earthly or natural wisdom, we mean the opinions and counsels, the maxims and rules, of the natural man—of one living in the light of revelation, but without special grace; and we view these also with an immediate reference to their peculiar agency on the whole of man's moral constitution. The former, we maintain, is the true and only wisdom: but the latter usurps the name of wisdom; and this, we think, is a fertile source of error and delusion. It is, therefore, of great moment to lead men to see that, as there is, in God's goodness to us, a genuine wisdom, so there is, in man's perverseness, a spurious wisdom; and also to see, further, that it is only the wisdom from above that makes us "wise unto salvation," whilst, with regard to our spiritual welfare here and for ever, the natural wisdom is just as impotent as it is wont to be arrogant.

We think, then, brethren, that we do you good service when we call you to examine closely the two sorts of wisdom, of which the Apostle speaks: and, in endeavouring to lead you to form a just and sound notion of them, we have nothing to do but to consider the effects or operations of each of them. We shall proceed on a plain ground of this kind:—What produces a good effect upon us is to be prized by us as an inestimable treasure: what produces no effect upon us, or a bad effect, is to be rejected by us as worthless or as pernicious. Let these maxims be kept in view; and if our remarks show you that the divine wisdom, emanating from the Sun of Righteousness, possesses a blessed and restoring energy, and that the natural wisdom is either inert or noxious,—at the very most, only amusing us and cheating us with

gay, and fitful, and transient corruscations of lifeless light, you must, we hope, carry away with you a strong conviction that every man ought to renounce his own natural wisdom, and, in the strength of divine grace, to resolve to be henceforth a disciple of the wisdom from above, and to surrender himself wholly to its guidance and control.

And now we observe, that,

I. The natural wisdom leaves us in darkness—in ignorance; but the wisdom from above implies essentially the real illumination of our minds. The former part of our observation may appear strange to you. Is it not absurd to suppose, that a man can possess wisdom, can be a wise man, and yet continue in ignorance? And yet this is the position that we maintain. We express ourselves in plain and bold language: a man may be wise for this world, yea, among the wisest of men, and yet be a fool in the things of God. He may be familiar with science and philosophy, with language and history; he may be penetrating, comprehensive, discreet, and judicious in his views and measures about secular matters; and yet with regard to divine things he may be in utter darkness. If human wisdom be all that he possesses, he does not, and he cannot, know them; for they are not to be seen, not to be apprehended, by the natural mind. And hence we find natural men who undertake to discuss religious subjects giving proof, by errors, by defects, and by wrong statements, that, however great be their accomplishments, they have undertaken that for which they are not qualified. And if such is the case where there is talent and erudition, how much more must it be the case where these are not possessed! The wise men of the world, from the greatest of them to the least of them, may know a thousand things, and be “wise in their

generation;" but they do not see, and do not understand, the spiritual world according to the discoveries of divine revelation. The true light of the world shines around them; but instead of coming forth into it, they walk in the light of their own fire, and in the sparks which they have kindled; and we can only conclude, that so far as spiritual things are concerned, their light is darkness and their wisdom folly.

But the wisdom from above is true light in the mind. "Who," the apostle asks, "is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?" And it was the prayer of St. Paul for the Colossians, that "they might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." The true ministers of CHRIST, and the true believers in CHRIST, can therefore unite in the declaration, that "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in their hearts;" so that as ministers they can speak to others of "the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of JESUS CHRIST," and as believers they enjoy it in themselves. What, indeed, is wisdom but a peculiar form of knowledge? If we have the true wisdom, we have gone forth into the light and splendour of truth; or rather that light and splendour has been poured forth upon us, even so as to pervade our intellectual nature; even so as to make our minds, if we may use the expression, one with the divine truth. And scarcely is the expression too strong; for, being thus illumined, we think of God, of CHRIST, of salvation, of ourselves, of the world, most simply and fully, most cordially and unreservedly, according to the teaching of the Scriptures. In short, therefore, a transition from natural wisdom to the wisdom from above, is, in a deep and spiritual view, a transition from darkness to light; and it is of the truly wise man, and of him only, that we can say

that he is "light in the Lord." We are compelled to rest in the conclusion, that the earthly wisdom leaves a man in spiritual darkness, and that it is only by the bright shining of the heavenly wisdom into our souls that we are made "children of the light and of the day." But,

II. The natural wisdom leaves us to be the slaves of our senses; but the divine wisdom makes our life to be a life of faith. We are often telling you, and it is one of the truths of which none of us can be reminded too frequently, that sense and faith are the masters of men; are the mighty principles which form and rule their hearts and lives. The one or the other of them is, and must be, the master of each of us; and "his servants we are to whom we obey." We are influenced and governed by our senses or by our faith. If the senses rule us, they confine us to the visible world,—to the affairs of the present life; but if faith rule us, we subordinate the world that is around us, and we look to, and we live for, the world that is above us and before us. And, surely, we may here bring that wisdom which we possess,—for either the natural or the supernatural wisdom is ours,—to a fair test: for our common sense will inform us, that if our wisdom leaves us the dupes and slaves of our senses, it is a feeble and a worthless thing; but if, on the contrary, our wisdom leads us to look to, and practically to regard, what is invisible and eternal, we have every reason to be satisfied and to rejoice.

We turn, then, for a moment to the natural wisdom; and it is true that it may often enable us and induce us to think with no small propriety, and to utter sentiments that possess much weight and force. We may speak well about good and evil, virtue and vice, and the fleeting character of all below. We may one while abound

in the exuberance of declamation, and another while give utterance to pithy oracles. If we were to be judged by our words at such seasons, it might be concluded that we weighed things in a true balance, and that we must certainly be of the number of those who regulate our conduct by Christian rules. We have nothing, however, but the natural wisdom; and, in this case, what is the fact with regard to our practical lives? Our knowledge, our warm declamation, our just and sober maxims, have very little influence upon us. The intellect puts forth its might in a moment of thought and reflection: but this moment was only a casual suspension of the agency of the senses; and these immediately resume their pre-eminence. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,—these are presented to us, and speedily gain the ascendancy over us: and, notwithstanding the specious manner in which our natural wisdom led us to speak, we remain the slaves of sin; obedient to the desires, passions, and appetites of our corrupt nature. Here we see the weakness, the inefficacy of the natural wisdom.

We value the wisdom from above for its light and discovery; but, if we may speak so, we value it still more for its life and efficiency. Where this wisdom is, there is a clear view and a sound judgment respecting the world and man's nature; for it tolerates nothing that is weak, or puerile, or absurd. It is seen and felt under its influence, that this world is only a shadowy stage of existence, that the soul is the noble part of man, and that futurity and eternity are the great and momentous subjects which demand our constant attention. It is seen and felt that divine truth and grace, that reason and conscience, that holiness and rectitude, that a world which never changes and an age which never ends, are

the great things which require, on our part, an absorbing solicitude. And how are these things thus seen and felt? We answer,—By virtue of a living faith. Under its influence the senses are not extinguished, but subordinated: they exist and act, but they are not the masters and tyrants of man. The soul, with all its faculties, is enlivened and invigorated, and it asserts its rightful superiority. And as in the rule of the natural wisdom, man is left under the dominion of the senses, and consequently leads what is, properly speaking, a worldly life, a carnal life, a life of sense; so in the rule of the heavenly wisdom, man is put under the dominion of faith, and consequently leads what is, properly speaking, a spiritual life, a heavenly life, a life of faith. Thus, brethren, we maintain that the earthly wisdom has little or no power to deliver you from the slavery of the senses, and to give you true spiritual liberty: and that it is the blessed and exclusive prerogative of the heavenly wisdom to enable man to live with a settled, practical, and preponderating reference to things unseen and eternal, as a believer in them. We proceed to observe, that,—

III. The natural wisdom leaves us in the worst spiritual state of the heart, both with regard to ourselves and our fellow-creatures; but the wisdom from above, according to the extent of its agency upon us, corrects all this evil, and enriches and adorns us with the purest and brightest excellence. It will be here admitted by every one, that a right estimation of ourselves, and a right disposition towards others, are matters of primary importance to us as Christians. We at once make our meaning plain and clear by simply telling you, that we refer to humility with regard to ourselves, and to love, charity, or benevolence, with regard to others. And we

mean to say, that our wisdom is misnamed wisdom if it fail to produce in us these principles and virtues, and to impart to them such vigour as shall cause them to give a tone and colour to our lives. If we be strangers to humility and love, we are strangers to the heavenly wisdom.

We see no justice, no advantage, in giving a distorted or degraded view of human nature. We always teach you that man is a piece of magnificent ruin. Truth and fact, however, require that we should view man in all his disorder, in all his perverseness, and in all his helplessness. We preach a remedy for human maladies, for all our wants and all our woes; but the malady, the poverty, the misery, must be known and felt before the remedy will be sought and applied, and before it can be justly appreciated. And here we say, fearless of contradiction, that pride and selfishness are two of the strong, universal, and deplorable corruptions of our nature. We cannot now dilate on these deadly evils:—on pride, which keeps us far from CHRIST and his salvation; on selfishness, by which we live to our own ease, pleasure, and emolument, and not to the good of others.

Our subject only leads us to observe at present, that the earthly wisdom leaves man in his natural pride, and rather increases than diminishes it. “Knowledge puffeth up:” and this is the case whether we look to the unsanctified teacher of science in his chair, or to the village declaimer on politics and secular affairs in the tavern. If a man have only a few superficial views, with boldness, readiness, and fluency of speech, he is admired and extolled by many, and he admires and extols himself. He cherishes pride. Humility is forgotten; perhaps despised.

And further, as this natural wisdom rather generates

than corrects pride, so it leaves a man to spend his days in what we have called selfishness. We mean to say, that he lives for himself. He is his own centre, his own world. We do not ask what occasional acts of charity or of kindness he may perform, or from what motive he performs them. These do not form his character. The doing of good in the world is not his object or his business. He may be wise as to the common affairs of life, but his wisdom does not teach him that he is an accountable being, and it does not induce him to use his talents for the good of man according to the divine will; or, in the language of Scripture, to be "rich in good works."

We are only glancing, in fact, at the subject: what we say is this, that the earthly wisdom,—any measure of it whatever,—makes no man humble and charitable: it leaves him the dupe and victim of his pride and selfishness; but we claim for the wisdom from above a divine energy,—an energy of universal influence: and where, we may ask, is that victorious and transforming agency more conspicuously displayed than in casting down man's vain and haughty imaginations, and "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of CHRIST?" than in making him before GOD and man as meek and gentle and humble as a little child? than, again, in warming, thawing, melting, expanding the cold, hard, and contracted heart of man, so that it shall habitually feel all that is noble in benevolence and tender in sympathy towards the whole human family? We indulge, brethren, in no dream, fancy, or theory; we only state a fact when we say, that in proportion as the wisdom from above acts on man, he is pervaded by humility, and clothed with humility, and he loves his fellow-creatures, not in word only, but in deed and in truth; and he

therefore rejoices to employ his time, his money, his influence, all his talents, in endeavouring to deduct, if only an atom, from the aggregate of human misery, and to add, if only an atom, to the aggregate of human happiness. He knows the demands of duty; he owns the ties and bands of obligation; and, above all, he feels the glowing, softening, and generous energies of Christian love; he considers himself a debtor to all men; and he habitually puts himself forth, whatever be his sphere, in the good work of sacred and humane philanthropy.

You think that you have wisdom: for who does not think that he is a wise man? Your wisdom, however, allows you to be proud and selfish; elated in yourselves and indifferent about others. Learn, brethren, we beseech you, that such wisdom is folly. You have the true wisdom when you are humble and benevolent; and this only is that which will end in your salvation. O tremble, we would say to you, to rest satisfied with a wisdom which is "devilish,"—such as belongs to demons. But,—

IV. The natural wisdom is compatible with indolence, while the wisdom from above tolerates no indolence, no slothfulness, but urges us to the maintenance of diligence and fidelity. We may see in St. Luke, xii. 35, 36, how beautifully and how forcibly our blessed Lord spake on this subject: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." Having only the natural wisdom, we may (as already observed) speak fine words about duty; perhaps go so far as to project fine things; but yet we remain supine, indolent, self-in-

dulgent, mere do-nothings. "My Lord delayeth his coming," so we speak,—or, at least, think,—and then heedlessly proceed in our own way. What egregious folly! And yet, what folly is more prevalent than this? Many Christians talk of good works, and we wish that we could see them; see them in their families, in their neighbourhood, and in the world. But the natural wisdom gives notions, gives words,—and, perhaps, inspires a wish, or even a resolve; but there it stops. And here we remark, that one distinguishing property of the true wisdom is, that it leads to action; in the words of the Apostle, it is "full of good fruits." It leads to self-denial, to sacrifice, to exertion, to persevering labour. Not an atom would we give for the wisdom which only deals in sonorous words and harmonious sentences. We discover the true wisdom where we feel the Christian spirit, and where we see the Christian conversation: that course of life which is a real engagement in endeavouring, with God's blessing, to promote the divine glory and the spiritual and temporal welfare of men. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," so spake our blessed Lord: and we are correct when we say, that the children of God, the followers of CHRIST, are and will be workmen, doers, labourers. We have said that wisdom is a peculiar form of knowledge; and we now add, that it is practical knowledge. We account no one to be wise merely on the ground of his mental stores or intellectual wealth. He is wise who has the best knowledge, conducting him in the best way, and, ultimately, producing the best result. Here, therefore, we weigh the natural wisdom in our balance, and it is found wanting. In short, it has no weight, for it consists only of notions and words,—things light as air. It excites its possessor to

no activity: it is not productive of good deeds: and, therefore, we turn from it as a worthless thing. But the heavenly wisdom is full of activity. Once more:

V. The natural wisdom leads to no spiritual growth; but the heavenly wisdom leads to progress and improvement. Under the dominion of the former, man is a sort of stationary creature; under that of the latter, he is always advancing. The natural wisdom is a cold and dry light: it puts forth no vivifying, and expanding, and fructifying, and controlling power. At thirty, forty, fifty, the man has the same views, speaks in the same strain, walks in the same path, and is, in short, making exception for the influence of time; very much the same character. There is no efflorescence with which he is adorned; no fruitfulness with which he is enriched. We can compare him to nothing but a stunted and hide-bound plant. There is no diffusion of some branches; no aspiring in others. The character is cold and tame, flat and monotonous. He may have made himself very intelligent in worldly matters, and be instructive or entertaining; but we are now only speaking of divine and spiritual things, and then we say, that he has no moral growth; and he stands even upon the borders of eternity, with his hoary head and his enfeebled powers, as,—and we can use no other language,—a piece of blind and dead secularity.

How different from all this—how happily the reverse of it,—is he who has the wisdom from above! He is always marked by improvement. To use the words of Scripture, he “abounds more and more.” He passes through the stages of the spiritual life. What a difference, brethren, between Abraham in Egypt denying his wife, and Abraham on Mount Moriah offering his son! What a difference between the believer in the morning

of his day, fearing, doubting, hesitating, wavering,—or, perhaps, vehement, positive, confident, censorious, rash; and that believer in the noon of his day, confirmed in the faith, and excellent in spirit, and consistent in conduct; and that believer in the evening of his day, stedfast, mild, and benevolent; firm in the truth, but full of affection and humility, simplicity and spirituality; with (if we may venture to speak so) more of heaven about him than of earth! It is thus, we say, rejecting everything like sentimentality, that where the heavenly wisdom is there will be an advancement and growth, a proceeding “from strength to strength,” a change “from glory to glory;” by which the partaker of grace here is preparing to become a partaker of glory hereafter. But we must quit the delightful theme: we can only say that we lay down the growth and the no-growth, as a solid test by which we may distinguish between the heavenly and the earthly wisdom.

Our limits forbid us to enter further into particulars. We can only remark that, if you give the subject the consideration which it deserves, you will see that the natural wisdom and the wisdom from above are, as we said at first, altogether different things; directly contrary to each other; forming, when brought together, a most striking contrast. The one is connected with ignorance, the other with knowledge; the one with subjection to the senses, the other with the prevalence of faith; the one with presumption, the other with hope; the one with selfishness, the other with benevolence; the one with rebellion, the other with obedience; the one with insensibility, the other with conflict; the one with a stationary condition, the other with progression; the one with low thought and sordid feeling, the other with lofty aspiration; the one with pride, the other with

humility; the one with indolence, the other with faithful diligence; the one exerts, at the most, only an influence that is temporary and partial; the other exerts an influence which is perpetual and universal.

And it is, brethren, by deep and close meditation on a subject of this kind that we learn the most important practical lessons. Here we are made acquainted with ourselves: here we see the excellence of the Gospel: here we see what we have to do in this world. We conclude the discourse with a few remarks on these points.

1. Here we are made acquainted with ourselves. We see the deadly and melancholy operations and fruits of sin. If, in the study of the crust of our globe, the geologist sees proof of violence and convulsion in the various positions of its strata, how much more clearly does the Christian see, while studying the moral state of our globe's inhabitants, the most abundant proof of the agency of an evil power, which has thrown their nature into complete disorder! Man came upright from the hands of his Maker; and if he had continued such, all his faculties, and the unvarying course of his life, would have been stamped with rectitude. He would have been completely under the guidance and control of the heavenly wisdom: no other wisdom would have been known. There would not have been two lights; there would not have been any antagonist principles, or any jarring and conflicting passions. All would have been order and unity; the unity of truth, holiness, obedience, and happiness; and this earth would have been the immediate suburbs of the celestial city. But what do we now see in the world, and what do we now feel in ourselves, but demonstrations of confusion? We are now, each of us individually, as it were, two men. This is the

case whether we view the natural man, who, amidst his corruption, has the better powers of reason and conscience; or whether we view the partaker of divine grace, who, as such, has, amidst remaining corruption, a renovating principle at work within him. And thus it is, that in our fallen but redeemed world, we find in ourselves, and in all around us, the agency and the fruits of contrary moral or spiritual elements; one class of which we may call "the wisdom from above," and the other class of which we may call "the wisdom that is earthly, sensual, devilish." If we know ourselves, we know our sinfulness; and then one of our first and strongest convictions will be, that our own wisdom is darkness, presumption, and folly: and he, we add, and he only, is the happy man who, by divine power, arrives at this conviction, and always cherishes it. But,

2. Here we see the excellence of the Gospel of CHRIST. What gratitude do we owe to GOD for not having left us in darkness and death! CHRIST is our wisdom. He is the Sun of Righteousness. His mighty radiance, his healing glory, is poured forth amidst the deep, and dense, and oppressive gloom of this fallen and sinful region; and upon whatever soul it rests and acts, with its vital and restoring virtues, it enables it to renounce evil, to war against it, to rise above it, and to shine, with an ever-increasing lustre, in the majesty and loveliness of all spiritual goodness. O, with what satisfaction and joy may we look, and ought we to look, upon the true disciple of the heavenly wisdom! Absolute perfection, indeed, does not belong to man upon earth; but yet there is a perfection which belongs to every real Christian. He is no deceiver of himself or of others. He is alive to all that we have said about the earthly wisdom; but a better wisdom is his. He sits in the

school of CHRIST; he is an humble scholar there, learning the best lessons, and imbibing the best influences. There he finds not only an illuminating, but also a transforming light; and hence he derives that frame of spirit which is familiar with all that is humble and lofty; with all that is holy, benevolent, and beneficent; with all, in a word, that becomes a creature who is passing through the turbid and mingled elements of a transitory world, to the substantial glory of eternity. Such, we say, is the true Christian.

And here we see the excellence of the Gospel of CHRIST. It is, indeed, a most merciful and gracious dispensation; a remedy for all our evils, a provision for all our wants. Are we alienated from God? are we guilty before Him? are we corrupt in our nature? is our retrospect most painful, and our prospect most awful? We look to the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and then we are reconciled to God, brought nigh to Him, pardoned, justified, accepted; yea, and progressively "transformed by the renewing of our mind," so that we know the will of God, and delight in it, and do it, and become more and more meet for the everlasting felicity above. Thus we have in the Gospel—we have in the wisdom from above—we have in CHRIST—all that blesses us, purifies us, comforts us, ennobles us; so that we may justly apply to it the language of Hannah—"It raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." We look to this world and to the next; we think of life and death; we meditate on the disclosures of the last day; we run in thought through the line of an unending existence; and in all these high and solemn contemplations, it is the mercy and grace, it is the light and life of the Gospel that form

the basis and the spring of all our hope and joy. If we are the children of the wisdom from above here, we know that it is well with us, and that it shall be well with us for ever. But—

3. Here we see what we have to do, and what we ought to do, in this world. We have already said, that “what produces a good effect upon us is to be prized by us as an inestimable treasure.” And surely it is evident, after what has been advanced, that the wisdom from above produces the best possible effect on its disciples. It follows, therefore, that we ought to prize that wisdom above all things, and to seek—which is the essential point—that it may act upon us with all its influence, and produce in us all its blessed fruits and results. We can only briefly advert to two cases.

Firstly, In the midst of the bright beams of heavenly wisdom we may be walking in darkness; we may be led and ruled by that wisdom which is “earthly, sensual, devilish.” In such a state, we are, properly speaking, without wisdom: we lack it; and what shall we do? Reflect on our condition, discover our folly, renounce the false and spurious light, and “ask of God” for wisdom, and “ask in faith, nothing wavering,” and we know that “God giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.” “If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.” Learn, brethren, the nothingness, the noxiousness of the earthly wisdom; and with the meekness, the humility, the earnestness, the importunity, the perseverance of children and of mendicants, implore our heavenly Father to give you wisdom—even that wisdom which is the light and life, the strength and health, the joy and triumph of the soul.

But, Secondly, You may be partakers of the wisdom from above; and in this case you need more of it, and that continually;—more of its pure light, more of its sanctifying influence, more of its fruits. The Apostle tells us, that “it is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” None of us are complete or entire in any of these things, and, therefore, we ought to feel the necessity of advancing in piety, that is, of “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.” The men of the world are wise in their generation, for they are true to their principles. Learn we a lesson from them. Be we wise, by being true to our principles. We profess to be God’s children and servants: walk we as such, with all diligence, fidelity, and watchfulness: walk we in the light, in the spirit, and by the laws of that wisdom which, by the Spirit of CHRIST, is poured around us, and infused into our souls. Thus we shall be happy in ourselves, “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour,” and be useful to others; and when the shades of evening shall gather about us, that wisdom which has been our guide in life will be our consolation in death; and, from the confusion and imperfection of the present state, we shall enter into that happy and glorious world, where “the wise shall shine with the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” God grant that you may consider these things, and be enabled, by his grace and teaching, to enter into them; always remembering that “the wise shall inherit glory; but shame shall be the promotion of fools.”



THE PROPHET ELIJAH.

THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

BY THE

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I. KINGS xix. 11, 12, 13.

And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.

SOME of you may remember when you first read or heard the chapter from which these words are taken, and the one which precedes it. You can recal, perhaps, a little of the vague awe with which they filled you when you were children; you can think of some picture which was shown to you or which you formed in your own minds of the prophet in the midst of the priests of Baal, standing before the altar built with the twelve stones after the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and drawing near at the time of evening sacrifice to pray for the fire which came down to consume his offering.

As the lessons were read to-day, it may be that you sighed because the vision had lost so much of its charm; because the prophet's words had become such dead sounds in your ears; because you could not now listen to them as if he was uttering them at whose prayer the heavens were shut up for three years and six months, and then poured forth the rain.

Such reflections and complaints are very natural when we are reading any portion of God's word; for our consciences tell us that there is an awful reality in it, and they tell us as often, that to us it is most unreal. But I do not know when they are more likely to occur to us than when we are listening to the story of Elijah. It is now nearly three thousand years old; all the scenery of it is strange to us; we are dwelling in a world altogether unlike like that in which he dwelt. And yet it seems as fresh as it was the hour it was written down, or the hour in which the events recorded in it took place; we feel instinctively that ages and revolutions, and remoteness of place, do not put us at a distance from it. We can see that the acts and the words have a meaning which belongs to us, and would reach us if our ears were not dull of hearing; we wonder that they do not penetrate through all that dulness.

It would seem as if this prophet were especially connected in Scripture with all great crises; as if we had no pretext for thinking of him,—at least as merely a portion of his own time.

When the history of the old world was to be wound up by the coming of the Lord, of whom it had been prophesying, and for whom it had been preparing the way, one was sent forth in the spirit and power of Elias to turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to be a voice crying in the wilder-

ness, "Make straight a highway for GOD." The Jews believed that an Elijah would come before the Great King. Our Lord told his disciples that he had already come. And yet the words in which He asserted this title for John the Baptist, the greatest of all the prophets, showed that he was to be the type and specimen of those who should follow him, that every true witness of the Kingdom of Heaven would like him come to prepare the way of the LORD, and, therefore, in his measure, would come, like him, in the spirit and power of Elijah. Nor was there anything in our LORD's language to contradict—much, when it is truly considered, to confirm—the belief which has been general in the Church that the final judgment upon this dispensation, like that upon the last, would be announced by some one corresponding in all essential characteristics to him who foretold the destruction of the house of Ahab, and to him who testified to the Scribes and Pharisees that the axe was laid to the root of the trees, and that all which did not bear good fruit would be hewn down, and cast into the fire.

The Bible and our consciences thus agree in giving a stamp of endurance to the office and preaching of Elijah, which, if we looked merely at the outside of his history, we could scarcely attribute to them. And I think both alike tell us where lay the secret of his power, and of its permanence. If a modern writer were describing Elijah's conflict with the priests of Baal, he would say, probably, that he bore a bold and manful testimony on behalf of the Jewish religion, or the true religion, against the Phœnician, or heathen religion, which Jezebel had introduced into Samaria. But I scarcely need tell you that the Bible uses no words of this kind. It does not speak of a Jewish religion, or even of a true religion. It speaks

of a LIVING GOD; it declares that Elijah bore witness for Him.

The priests of Baal were vigorous defenders of a religion. They clothed their own thoughts and feelings in outward forms, and worshipped them. Elijah spoke of one who is, and was, and is to come—of the LORD God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, who had made a covenant with their fathers and with them, who had declared that He was their King, and that they were his people. It was this faith which Ahab and the priests had lost; they had become slaves of their senses; nothing was real to them but what they could see and handle; they felt no real connexion with their fathers; they acknowledged no covenant with an unseen Being; they could not feel any obligation to such a Being; they could not tell how it was possible to fear Him or trust Him. The people which halted between two opinions could not quite give up the words and traditions of their infancy; but they had ceased to have any real power over them. The name of JEHOVAH was a fearful name to them still, but it was only fearful: they did not cleave to it with heart and soul, as the name of the living LORD; the one ground of their life, and of the life of all things; the one bond of their fellowship to each other. Elijah alone believed in the name of the LORD, and could venture every thing upon it. All outward tokens of his presence might be gone. The Temple might be far away at Jerusalem; the king who reigned in Samaria might not be an offspring of David, the elect king, the man after God's heart; around him might be high places and altars, the worship of things in the heaven above, and the earth beneath, and the waters under the earth. All else was changed. But Elijah knew that the LORD of all was not changed, that He could not lie, or alter the

thing which had gone out of his lips. He had made a covenant with this people, and He remembered it though they forgot it. Though there might be but one true Israelite left, that one might lay hold of the truth which belonged to his whole nation as well as to himself. He might build the altar with the stones which denoted the twelve tribes; he might draw near to the unseen Presence at the time appointed by the Law which his countrymen had cast off; he might pray that He who alone knew the hearts of the children of men would turn the hearts of his revolted people backwards; he might trust all to the issue: "The LORD which answereth by fire, let Him be God."

This was the faith which sustained the prophet who lived among the idolatries of the house of Ahab, and it was the only faith which could have sustained him, or could sustain those who came after him. Outwardly all was most different in the days of John the Baptist. There was no apparent idolatry; the Temple had been carefully rebuilt; the letter of God's word was studied and written out with incessant diligence; every thing which had been cast off by the house of Ahab was cherished by the Scribes and Pharisees. And the acts of the new prophet were altogether unlike those of his predecessor; he does not shut up the heaven by his prayers; he challenges no priests to a conflict; he calls no fire from heaven; he simply preaches in the wilderness, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And yet, brethren, we are told that this man with his raiment of camel's hair and the leathern girdle about his loins came in the spirit and power of Elijah; nor could any other spirit and power have availed him anything. For this seemingly believing age had really as little faith in a living GOD as that which raised altars to Baal. They had notions and

theories concerning Him and His acts and words; about these they could dispute from morning till night. They knew everything about Him; only they knew nothing of Him. The thought of His presence among them, of His being a God nigh and not afar off, of the kingdom of heaven being at hand; this they shrunk from. They did not forget His name; but it had become a mere name; they could speak of it readily because it meant nothing to them. Their idolatry was not manifest and gross like that of Ahab and his court, but it had penetrated deeper; it had got possession of their heart's core. The spirit of mammon, the unbelief in anything which cannot be seen and handled, could be combined in them, with all the phrases and rites which belonged to the worship of the true God. They did not forget Abraham; but they said within themselves, "We have Abraham to our father," and they did not remember that it was Abraham's privilege to be brought nigh to God, and that the real child of Abraham must claim a direct relation to Him, must look forward to be owned as his child, and to be a blessing to all the families of the earth; otherwise he did not understand his covenant. He then who was sent to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, though he might only come preaching repentance and baptizing with water for the remission of sins, did in fact bring with him the same message as Elijah. He came to rouse the people to a belief that the God whom they served was a living Being; that their covenant had not become an old worn-out document, but was still a living reality, and would be fulfilled; that He who they had thought of as afar off would suddenly come to his Temple; nay, was even then in the midst of them. He came that the fulfiller of the covenant, the Son of David and Abraham, might be

manifested to Israel; that in the waters of baptism he might be proclaimed as the Son of God, and might be openly sealed with the Spirit; so that the name of the God of Abraham, and of the I AM, might be unfolded into the more awful name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the one God blessed for ever; and that the old covenant, "They shall be my people and I will be their God," should not pass away, but be taken into the higher, "I will be to them a Father, and they shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

And little, brethren, as it behoved any minister of the new covenant to copy the outward peculiarities either of John the Baptist or Elijah, (for one did not copy the other, but each was taught by the Spirit to adopt the mode of utterance which was most suitable to his own time,) we may confidently affirm, that in this sense every man who has been raised up at any period of the Church, to accomplish any signal work, has come forth in the spirit and power of Elijah, and with his message. All have come to declare a Living Being, to speak of an actual King, and Deliverer, and Judge; to tell men that He is near them already, and will, in some act of mercy and judgment, show that He is near; to witness for his covenant as a reality, and not a deception; to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at your hand. You should with your spirits be entering into it and beholding it."

Nor can it be otherwise with any future messenger who may be appointed to declare that the mystery of God is finished, and to prepare men for a more awful day than all which have gone before it. Whatever may be the condition of the world, when his voice is lifted up in it, whether it be drowned in revelries, or bowing the knee to Mammon, or seeking fleshly wisdom, or

broken into classes of rich and poor suspecting and hating each other, or rent in pieces by religious systems and controversies, or whether all these signs shall be strangely and fearfully combined as they were in the days of our Lord's incarnation, of this we may be certain, that the cry in the wilderness will be, as it was of old, Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be laid low; every fortress of sensual, intellectual, or spiritual pride shall be demolished, and the poor shall not always be forgotten, and the patient abiding of the meek (who have trusted in his promise and awaited its accomplishment, not for themselves chiefly but for the world), shall not perish for ever. For the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and the glory of man shall either do it homage or shrink away and be confounded altogether.

And herein I believe, my brethren, we find the key to that part of Elijah's history which we have been reading this afternoon, and its connexion with that which preceded. It was a strange work to which Elijah was called, when he was bidden to defy the king of his land; to mock the priests of Baal in their high places; and finally to destroy four hundred of them. The glory of the service consisted in this, that it was the victory of weakness over strength, a sign how poor and trumpery all visible power is, when it comes into conflict with the invisible. A most useful lesson, which, if we will not learn it, as so few of us do, from the manifold evidence of daily ordinary facts, must be impressed upon us by terrific judgments. But he who has a commission to prove this truth to the world, may be himself in the greatest danger of forgetting it; nay, the very power which has been given him for this end, may tempt him to forget it. This sense of strength is an awful thing; a

man may feel, I am utterly helpless; then a power which he knows is not his own may speak and act by him; he may wonder and rejoice to be an instrument in God's hands. The next hour the thought, "It was I who did it," will come into his mind, and take possession of it; he may use the words and phrases profusely which ascribe the victory to God, while he is inwardly feeding upon it as a glory to himself. And therefore it is mercifully ordained that after such efforts and before the pride which succeeds them is ripened, there should come a kind of stupor over the spirit of the man who was lately lifted so high. Elijah heard that Jezebel had sworn to do to him as he had done to the priests of Baal: that was a threat which he knew she would have executed long before, if she could; he had less need to fear it now than ever; the mere death he did not fear; he wished and prayed for it. But he went a day's journey into the wilderness, and sat down under a juniper-tree, and said, "It is enough, oh LORD GOD, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers."

He finds how little the recollection of a great achievement—how little even the sense of being the minister of God in it—can sustain him; he is no better than his fathers, though the fire has come down at his call, and though he has slain four hundred priests. He is not yet content to be nothing; he would still like to feel himself something above those who went before him. This lurking ambition must be brought to light and purged away. His discipline is a most gracious one. He is taught that there is an unseen friend watching beside him when he sleeps and when he wakes; his bodily wants are cared for; the cake and the cruse of water are provided for him, while he lies under the tree; in the strength of that meat he

goes forty days to the Mount of God. He has learned that "man does not live by bread alone;" that strength of limb, the life of the flesh, is from God. But his spirit is still unquiet. He has a confused sense of not being requited for his toil; of his lot being a hard one. Once it was a great thought that he was raised up to be the one witness for the LORD GOD of Israel; now he begins to feel the want of human sympathy and fellowship; and he almost thinks that the cause of God rests upon him; that if he were taken away it must perish. "I have been very jealous for the LORD GOD of Hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, and pulled down thy altars, and I, I only am left: and they seek my life." Then He to whom he prayed said, "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD." And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave."

Here were all the terrible forms in which men recognize power,—wind, earthquake, fire. The prophet knows that they have come from the LORD; that they show Him to be passing by: but yet he feels no influence from them; he sees them, but they cannot move him. There is not the might in them which can reach him or subdue him. He listens to them as to the wild shrieks of a world breaking into atoms; he may be broken into atoms with it; yet there is a heart in him with which they have nothing to do, which does not own them.

But after the fire came a still small voice. Here was that which he must own; which his heart confesses to be its master: here was that which was really appalling. The LORD was in this, and the prophet, who could not be moved by that rage of the elements, "covered his head with his mantle, and went out, and stood at the entering in of the cave."

The lesson was complete. He had been taught what Power is not, and what it is; he had been cured of his craving for that power which shall rend rocks in pieces, and he had been taught to prize his weakness; he had been shown what kind of strength it is which might come forth through that weakness to move his fellow-men. And, dear brethren, we, every one of us, though we may not be prophets, and may have no strange work committed to us, must by some process or other have this truth driven home to our hearts. In all of us there is this coveting of power; this misunderstanding of its true nature; this restless craving for external exhibitions of it; the vain hope, that if we could see them or produce them, we should be affected ourselves or should affect others. And then comes the idolatry of that which carries with it the external symbols and tokens of power, drawing us away from the worship of that which indeed possesses it. We are hurried into violent impatient efforts of our own to accomplish that which God would accomplish by His silent and mysterious methods; we invent a way for ourselves, instead of yielding ourselves to be His servants and to do His will. Have you not tried sometimes to gather about yourselves greater and more terrible evidences of the reality of God's word and threatenings; have you not thought that if you could see them set before your eyes in some terrific external manifestation, even in some vivid image

or dream, you would not then treat them as heedlessly as you now do; they would not all pass by you as if they signified nothing? Have you not said to yourself, I should like to see on every road side some reminiscence of the divine power and the divine holiness, that would shake me out of my forgetfulness, and make me feel that heaven and hell are not merely phantoms of my mind? Brethren, we must cast away such thoughts, they are idle and will deceive us. Not pictures and signs merely of the fire, wind, and earthquake which betoken that the LORD is passing by, might be gazed at with our eyes, but the actual wind, fire, and earthquake might be felt by us, and yet our hearts remain just as unmoved as they were. We might live, how many thousands have lived, amidst the horrors of a besieged city, through the whirlwind of a great revolution which shakes kingdoms and empires to their centre, and be just as light and vain after as before it. We may see (alas! how many ministers of CHRIST know this,) daily spectacles of death, bodily and spiritual; it may be our business, our vocation to converse with such spectacles; and we may have the most appalling inward assurance that they are incapable of working any habitual awe or sympathy in us. And if it is ever otherwise,—if ever the sight of GOD's hand stretched out does lead us to a better, truer state of mind, it is because we have heard the still small voice speaking through them, interpreting the sense of them. If you look back upon your lives, if you recollect the most memorable and sad passages of them, you will find that it has always been so. Calamities the most overwhelming to yourselves, the most crushing to all about you, were useful just so far as they led you to listen for this voice, and to ask that it might reach you because nothing else could. Outward events affect us only by driving us

away from themselves, by forcing us to seek the unseen LORD of the heart and spirit.

Has it not been the same also in your dealings with your brethren? Have you not oftentimes hoped to overthrow them with some blast of rhetoric or argument? Have you not wondered that they were not swept away by it? But the LORD was not in that wind. Have not you then tried to shake their very souls by an awful exhibition of the consequences of the acts and opinions which you disapproved? They were moved, perhaps, at the moment, but only the more fixed in their courses afterwards, for the LORD was not in that earthquake. Vehement passion, denunciation, persecution remained; you tried them; they too failed; the LORD was not in that fire. Have not you then sometimes been astonished, even mortified, to find that a few plain words, a simple assertion of faith, by a humble person who knew nothing of argument, the kind loving act of some one who had no vehement words at command, has touched the hard heart, and opened the fountains of tears which had seemed for ever dry? The still small voice was there, and the LORD was in it.

Surely, brethren, this experience may be a great help to us in understanding GOD's words, and all the course of his dealings with us. "Not by might nor power, but by my spirit," is the truth He is teaching us everywhere.

Only do not let us pervert that doctrine into the notion that we are to lie sick and dying beside the healing pool, until some angel goes down and troubles it. There is one ever near us who is saying, "Rise up and walk," who is giving us those energies which we have not in ourselves; or who, if He crushes our energies for a time, only does it that we may know where the secret of them

lies. Since He took flesh and dwelt among us; since He shewed forth power in weakness, we must expect to find his servants fitted for any work that He appoints for them by the like process. They must be taught to hear the still small voice saying to them, "This is the way, walk ye in it," by the experience of their own ignorance, and confusions, and self-will; they must be taught not to drown that voice in their own; not to think that they can make it more audible to others by their cries and shrieks; to learn that the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God,—that the quietest means are the mightiest,—that the false prophets cry and cut themselves with stones,—that the true one merely draws nigh at the time of the evening sacrifice, and asks the LORD GOD of Israel to turn the heart of his people back again;—that the meekest prayer is most likely to call the fire from heaven;—that gentle and loving acts are the best witnesses for the GOD of love. To learn this thoroughly and practically is slow and hard work; but it must be learnt, and GOD himself is our teacher in it. If we will submit to be guided by His spirit, to work in His way, He will complete the lesson in us as He did in His prophet of old; and then when the day of his manifestation comes, though the rocks may be rent and the earth may quake, and the fire may destroy all that is corrupt, it will not be these things that will move us; it will be the vision of Him whom we have been waiting for, it will be His still small voice, saying to every trusting spirit, "Enter thou into the joy of thy LORD."

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